THE LEADERSHIP SELF-AWARENESS PROCESS: A NARRATIVE STUDY EXPLORING HOW EXPERIENCED LEADERS USE SELF-AWARENESS AND DECEPTION TO ALIGN THEIR BEHAVIOR TO THEIR GOALS

A thesis presented by Patricia Feig Steiner to The School of Education in partial fulfillment of the Requirements of the degree of Doctor of Education in the field of Education

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to Harriet Caruso who was always there for me. Harriet leads an amazing life of service to children and gives to others more than anyone else I know. I was fortunate to be one of them. Thank you Harriet: for all your help and guidance. Thank you for being an amazing friend, role model, and confident. I could not have done this without you.
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Abstract
This was a narrative study that explored how experienced leaders from Western cultures made sense of their personal journey towards achieving an alignment of their values, morals, and inner most intent, with the actions they took when running their professional organizations. This study examined the socially constructed reality of experienced leaders and what and how they internalized feedback so that they came to believe that their inner selves aligned or did not align with their actions. Many authors consider self-awareness to be the most important trait in authentic leadership and yet there is very little documentation of self-awareness behavior in the literature and even less advice on how to use the skill to achieve alignment values, morals, and inner most resolve. Through the voices of these leaders, it was possible to explore the thought processes that they used for making decisions, performance, and the reflective journey being taken while dealing with their challenges of self-awareness and perceived authenticity. Leaders who were struggling with self-awareness could unknowingly risk the goals of their organization and its followers by resorting to deceptive practices. The results of this study served to provide leaders, scholars, and leadership coaches much needed narrative examples of self-aware behavior as well as ignorance of that behavior that often results in deception. These narratives could be used to teach and explain self-awareness, deception, inauthentic, and authentic behavior. Further conclusions from this study included examples of self-awareness, deceptive thinking, and findings on when, how, and why sense making occurred in different organizational contexts.

Keywords: Self-awareness, Authenticity, Feedback, Deception, Leadership
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Doctoral Dissertation

The Leadership Self-awareness Process: A Narrative Study Exploring How Experienced Leaders Use Self-awareness and Deception to Align Their Behavior to Their Goals

1. Introduction

Self-awareness and authenticity were considered among the most important traits in leadership development by many authors (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2001; Ashley & Reiter, 2012; Snowden, 2002). The absence of documentation on self-aware behavior and authentic leadership conduct in the literature is a mystery. Throughout the literature, there was even less information and advice on how to use self-awareness skills to achieve alignment of values, morals, and inner most resolve that frame authentic leadership (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2011).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand aspects of self-awareness and authentic behavior in leaders in order to partially fill the gap of missing information in the literature, and to document this behavior for use in leadership training. The knowledge generated from this study was also created to inform leadership practice. If self-awareness and authenticity were important to leadership, examples of these behaviors were needed so that leaders could develop the skills associated with these behaviors (McMasters, 1999; Roberts, 2014).

Through the use of the narrative paradigm, this study documented and analyzed the internal reality constructed by eight experienced leaders and how their roles were impacted by being self-aware. The leaders selected for this study were experienced individuals on whom organizations, employees, clients, and customers solely depended to make the life-critical and organization-critical decisions necessary to meet or exceed stated and implied needs, to be successful, and sustain existence. It had been theorized that experienced leaders used self-
awareness to make sense of their environments and learn from their circumstances which were usually chaotic, required role flexibility, and complex social, psychological, and physiological functioning (Axelrod, 2012; Gardner, Cogliser, Davis, & Dickens, 2011; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2001; Prati, Douglas, & Ferris, 2003; Nesbit, 2012; Roberts, 2014; Sparrowe, 2005). Through the voices of these leaders, it was possible to explore the thought processes that they used for decision making, performance, and the reflective journey they took while dealing with their challenges.

The participants were experienced leaders from around the United States, working in various fields, (technology, education, law, commerce, consulting, and finance) who had at least 10 years of experience in their leadership roles. They were selected based on an authenticity intake form that originated with The Role Specific Evaluation of Authenticity in Leaders, Roberts, (2014)). These experienced leaders took part in informal, semi-structured interviews based on a predetermined list of questions and topics created by the research team. This format allowed the researcher to follow topical trajectories in the conversation in a way that was flexible and comfortable for the participants.

The narrative method was used in this study to examine leadership self-awareness and authentic behavior and also to inform the data collection process. The use of the narrative method was seen as a more effective way to describe elusive interview results involving subjective, disjointed content (Caldwell, 2009) than a list or chronicle of proceedings (Bozatzis & Dragonas, 2014; Sikes & Gale, 2006). Data were assembled through transcription of conversations from the interview process. Results included examples of leadership self-awareness, feedback sent and received, and examples of authentic behaviors. In addition, the study unveiled all aspects of deceptive behaviors, from the findings on when, how, and why
deception occurs, to possible recommendations for using self-awareness as a solution for reducing deceptive thinking and practice.

**Problem of Practice**

Without self-awareness skills, a leader’s thinking could be distorted by deception (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992; Leary & Tangney, 2003; Rose, Rouhani, & Fischer, 2013). The often complex and chaotic environment that surrounded a leader (Axelrod, 2012; Gardner, Cogliser, Davis, & Dickens, 2011; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2001; Prati, Douglas, & Ferris, 2003; Nesbit, 2012; Roberts, 2014; Sparrowe, 2005) could cause self-awareness to be underutilized, ignored, or abandoned. This could result in cognitive self-awareness dysfunction (Boyatzis, 2007) causing a leader to react in bouts of deception that could manifest as discrepancies between the way in which leaders knew they should behave and the ways in which they actually did behave (Festinger, 1957). Additionally, self-awareness dysfunction could result in feedback avoidance (Moss and Sanchez, 2004) which often had a negative effect in the way a leader gathered evidence, reached conclusions, and collaborated with followers (Kunda, 1990). The skill of sending and receiving feedback was seen by many authors as an essential leadership capability that was directly attributed to leadership self-awareness, authenticity, and effectiveness (Ashley & Reiter-Palmon, 2012; Axelrod, 2012; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2001; Snowden, 2002).

The lack of availability of effective leadership training to support leaders in developing and using self-awareness skills was a critical issue. Leadership theorists and executive coaches who promoted the importance of authenticity and self-awareness for maximizing the positive capacity of leaders needed more information in order to provide training and coaching (Kombarakaran, Baker, Yang, & Fernandes, 2008; Gregory, Beck, & Carr, 2011). There were
insufficient examples of self-aware and deceptive practices in the literature. As a result of this deficit, practical advice on best practices and how to effectively use the skill of self-awareness to achieve desired goals was also limited.

This study sought to fill gaps in the literature by providing rich, descriptive examples in the form of narrative vignettes of experienced leaders who expressed their awareness of themselves and their resulting authentic and deceptive actions.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this doctoral thesis was to uncover how experienced leaders described their self-awareness process as they sought to enhance their authentic leadership. Authenticity and self-awareness were considered the most important traits in leadership (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2001; Ashley & Reiter, 2012; Snowden, 2002) and yet there was very little documentation of self-aware or authentic behavior in the literature and even less advice on how to use these traits to achieve alignment values, morals, and inner most resolve.

Interviews were conducted to provide examples of self-awareness and resulting authentic behavior. Examples of deception that could occur when self-awareness was marginalized or discarded were also included. The interviews conducted in this study were created to provide leaders and leadership coaches with rich, descriptive examples of self-awareness and authentic behavior through the voices of experienced leaders who were executing in complex leadership environments. These experienced leaders also revealed some of the barriers to authentic behavior created by internal and external circumstances that challenged authentic behavior and often manifested as deceptive practice (Caldwell, 2009; Steiner, 2014).
The findings in this study provided suggestions and techniques that supported the development of self-awareness and authenticity that could be used by leaders and leadership coaches to increase self-awareness and authenticity and reduce occurrences of deception.

**Research questions**

This study focused on documenting specific examples of the self-awareness process. Also documented was the feedback that permeated self-awareness processing that resulted in authentic behavior in experienced leaders undertaking stressful, complex, or chaotic situations that challenge authentic behavior.

The research questions were:

1. How did experienced leaders use self-awareness to make sense of their actions and practices in complex and chaotic environments?

2. How could authenticity theory be used to conceptualize authenticity, particularly in regard to identifying and understanding critical interpersonal processes such as self-awareness and feedback?

**Significance for Research and Practice**

Research showed that self-awareness and authenticity were important precursors to successful leadership (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2001; Ashley & Reiter, 2012; Snowden, 2002). By examining experienced leaders in their various working environments and looking specifically at a leader’s self-awareness skills which may have resulted in authentic behavior, an enhanced understanding of leadership performance could be gained as well as a better grasp of how self-awareness and authenticity could improve leadership. Understanding how experienced leaders knew what they knew (experimental knowledge or developed wisdom), and how
experienced leaders could be taught to be self-aware in a way that led to authentic behavior, could result in improved leadership training and effectiveness.

Raising awareness to the critical aspects of self-awareness and authenticity and the part that self-awareness and authentic behavior played in leadership was not only important to leaders but to those whom they led and anyone else who sought to align themselves with their personal truth. If leadership could be improved by understanding these traits and the part that they play, then this study would play an important role (McMasters, 1999). This study would be significant if it led to a better understanding of deceptive practices that blocked critical feedback, and obstructed decision making. Deception has been known to cause distortion of reality, impaired relationships, and compromised decision making (Caldwell, 2009; Rose, Rouhani, & Fischer, 2013; Steiner, 2014). It followed that action should be taken to reduce or eliminate deceptive behavior when and where possible so that authenticity could be achieved.

Self-awareness and authenticity were important in roles other than leadership. It was possible that knowledge about leader self-awareness, authenticity, and feedback could be transferred to other contexts that involved leading and learning such as schools, programs, and institutions that provided education or training to adults.

Relevance

This study informed leaders and leadership coaches about the benefits of developing self-awareness skills, and authentic behavior and provided examples of these behaviors. The more leaders understood the positive impact of self-awareness and authenticity, the more they could incorporate them into the outcomes of their organizations and the growth of the people with whom they worked.
This study provided examples of the dialogue that took place within the leader, sometimes self-aware, sometimes aligned with authentic behavior, and sometimes involved in deceptive practices used to reach an authentic goal.

**Theoretical Framework**

Self-awareness and how the self-awareness process (Figure 1) led to authentic behavior and limited occurrence of deceptive behavior was the focus of this study. Using authenticity as a framework, this study traced the progression of self-aware internal processing of feedback to actual behavior. The framework used considered the nature of self to identify how these components work together to result in authentic behavior.

Figure 1. The Circle of Self-Awareness

According to Roberts (2014), authenticity required consistency between primary experience, symbolized awareness or internal representation of experience, and outward behavior and communication (Figure 1). This study looked for evidence of this process in action. The authenticity framework, grounded in person-centered psychology, self-based theories (including self-awareness), and self-determination theory (SDT) provided a lens for these behavioral areas which together described a multidimensional concept, a construct that had key components that were unique to one another but the meaning of which required all components to create the construct (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2011). These components, psychological,
physiological, and behavioral were all unique to one another, perhaps having some overlap, and all were required. This was the nature of the authenticity framework. This was also true of self-awareness, a sub theory within the authenticity construct. This study used direct subject feedback as a mechanism to consider the nature of self-awareness and authentic behavior and how these components worked together.

The theoretical framework of this study defined self-awareness according to authentic behavior theory and approached thinking about an authentic individual’s “self” (Roberts, 2014), having the ability to perceive the inner workings of the self as he or she interacted with the world. This included awareness of and reflection on not only feedback from the outside world but of physiological responses, emotions, thoughts, drives, needs, or intuitive reactions (Duval & Wicklund, 1972).

Self-awareness was considered a psychological and behavioral process whereby the individual lived in awareness of their true inner self. Self-aware behavior occurred when an individual knew who they were at their core, they were mindful of their authentic self at any given moment, and they freely and constructively revealed their true self with others (Ashley & Reiter-Palmon, 2012; Axelrod, 2012; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2001; Snowden, 2002). Morin’s (2006) theory of self-awareness levels was used as a framework in this study to describe stages of self-awareness that were revealed in the voices of the leader participants.

Self-awareness could generate both negative and positive feelings and emotions. Negative feelings and emotions often occurred when an individual realized that they were not adequately living up to their personal standards or ideals. This realization required well-developed self-awareness skills in order to properly handle negative feelings so that they did not turn into self-deceptive outcomes (Caldwell, 2009; Rose, Rouhani, & Fischer, 2013; Steiner,
Private assessments were constantly being made when individuals reflected upon internal conflicts that challenge them. Self-awareness was the psychological mechanism that enabled this level of reflection (Rose, Rouhani, & Fischer, 2013; Steiner, 2014; Taylor & Bright, 2011).

The proposed authenticity framework (Figure 2) described the existing theory on self-awareness by addressing experiential, historical, motivational, and context-specific nature of self. The framework offered a preliminary explanation of how aspects of self-awareness may have existed within a person (Roberts, 2014).

The combination of theories that made up the authenticity framework: self-awareness, self-knowledge, self-regulation, and authentic behavior theories came from the seminal literature that was reviewed in depth in chapter two. This was the nature of the framework for the self-awareness context in leadership being proposed. The authenticity framework provided not only a structure of insight into the nature of how the self may be known and experienced through awareness, it included the motivations underlying regulation of the self and the outward expression of self that could be called authentic.

Figure 2. Authenticity Feedback Cycle
This study used an authenticity measure developed by Roberts (2014) known as the Role Specific Evaluation of Authenticity in Leaders (REAL) to explain self-awareness, particularly with regard to how an individual’s self may or may not have been known, regulated, and demonstrated behaviorally.

Critics of authenticity theory usually argued that authenticity could be manufactured or that it was not always a good idea to be your true self (Ibarra, 2015). Sometimes, who you really were was not a good thing (Taylor, 1991). In the quest for achievement, recognition, or power, leaders may have created personas that were not ethically aligned with who they ultimately wanted to be or how they wished to be perceived (Parens, 2005). The argument against authenticity seemed to lie not in the agreement that being who one was at their core was a good idea but in their definition of authenticity and how it is applied to everyday life (Parens, 2005).

One disagreement involved authenticity being synonymous with consistency (Ibarra, 2015) as opposed to the ability to be authentic in different ways in order to accommodate particular contexts (Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997). The argument questioned how people who behaved differently in different situations could be considered authentic. According to Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi (1997), it was possible to have more than one authentic behavior. This researcher assumed the stance that being true to who one was, was a good thing and supported the work of Ashley & Reiter (2012), Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee (2001), Roberts (2014), and Snowden (2002) in believing that this skill was critical to successful leaders.

**Justification for selection of authenticity theoretical framework**

The authenticity framework was chosen because it covered not only self-awareness but the results of self-aware processing. Based on the researcher’s experience working with leaders, leadership self-awareness alone was not seen as sufficient. For self-awareness to be of value in
leadership, leaders had to be able to embody their self-awareness in the form of action. Self-awareness theory (most often referred to as objective self-awareness or OSA) alone did not cover resulting behavior (Duval & Wicklund, 1972). It did not cover the transformation that resulted from the feedback that was internalized and processed through the self-aware individual. In order to impact real-world organizations, the skill had to be practiced and the results studied and refined so that the leader learned and made actual change according to the feedback that they received (Mohrman & Lawler, 2012; Zaccaro, 2007). This was authenticity in action. It was only when self-awareness could be authenticated that it was truly effective and useful to anyone outside the individual (Roberts, 2014).

**Research Design**

**Rationale**

The narrative paradigm was used to examine and document the self-awareness processing of experienced leaders. Research for this study was conducted through semi-structured interview questions designed to examine internal and external feedback and authentic and deceptive outcomes of participants. The qualitative method used was appropriate for a study using detailed personal stories and life experience of the participants (Creswell, 2013). Vignettes were created to capture and condense fragmented conversations that take place over an extended timeframe (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013).

Eight experienced leaders were selected who were experienced and successful in their organizations. The primary requirement for participation was an individual’s position as a leader with a successful career with at least 10 years of leadership experience. Success factors included objective evaluation of the financial and strategic state of the leaders’ organization and structure, and subjective assessments of the leader’s sense of affiliation, sense of life balance, sense of
identity, and sense of alignment with personal needs. The sampling size was small, but it was suitable for the narrative approach (Butin, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994). According to Creswell, “Narrative research is best for capturing the detailed stories or life experiences of a single individual or the lives of a small number of individuals.” (p. 74).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant, transcribed, and coded to capture significant leader insights into their behavior. Using the vignette outline from Miles and Huberman (1984) and the coding analysis outline by Bogdan and Biklen (1992), data analysis included the following coding methods:

- common theme
- vignette
- descriptive
- in vivo
- axial

**Applying authenticity theory**

Authenticity theory provided a lens with which the outcomes of self-awareness could be examined. As participants were asked to comment on their lives, their work, and their decisions, they reflected on their thoughts in a way that encouraged inquiry in terms of the alignment between their internal thoughts and specific external actions that they had chosen. Through discussion, examination of decisions made, actions taken, feedback taken and given, and recognized thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, authenticity was explored and traced from the external world to the core of the leader’s motivation and back again. Using this method, awareness of the consistency with the self and the degree to which there was alignment between the self’s concept of its “true” behavior and actual behavior was accomplished. When and if alignment between thought and action did not occur, further reflection and discussion between interviewer and participant ensued. This allowed the participant to examine discrepancies.
between exhibited behavior and authentic or self-aware behavior and as a result, possibly improve their behavior, style, or substance.

The literature review (Chapter 2) of this study provided background information of the scholarly writing that informed this study and application of this theoretical framework. There was a great deal of acceptance of the idea that authenticity and self-awareness were keys to leadership success (Ashley & Reiter, 2012; Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2001; Roberts, 2014; Snowden, 2002). There was less written on the damage that could result from deceptive practices or how to encourage self-awareness (Caldwell, 2009; Steiner, 2014).

**Positionality**

By acknowledging bias, it made it more likely that subjectivity could be controlled in this research (Machi & McEvoy 2009). While it was critical to this inquiry that bias did not affect objectivity, the researcher of this project acknowledged that the twenty plus years of leadership experience and experience as a leadership consultant to chief (C-level) executives around the world was used to formulate this study and could possibly influence the findings of the research. Organizational experience that influenced this study included economic development firms, government agencies, and businesses large and small. The researcher also taught business and leadership classes at four universities in the United States.

The researcher’s bias included the following:

- Most people had blocks to learning. Some or occasionally all of these barriers could be partially or completely removed or transformed.

- Because self-awareness was not a priority, self-deception persisted, impacting not only leaders but most people.

- Everyone had the potential to be successful and accomplish their goals.
- It was important to be aware of habits of prejudging others and of making comparisons based on personal expectations.
- Leaders were not always good at listening.
- Positive as well as negative feedback was a gift yet it was often experienced with resistance and negativity.
- Programs could be created using self-awareness techniques that could assist learners and leaders with their learning and leading processes.

Steps were taken to increase objectivity in this study through a thorough and extensive literature review and by conducting carefully vetted subject interviews. The study also solicited critical feedback from external sources that provided objective feedback on research questions, methods, design, and findings. In addition, all narratives and vignettes that resulted from participant interviews were reviewed, validated, and approved by the contributing participants. Any preconceived notions of the researcher that were not supported were not included in the results of this research.

**Limitations**

Potential limitations of this study included single-source data collection. Due to the elusive nature of the subject, having more than one researcher conducting the interviews could have resulted in a more comprehensive and less biased approach to the analysis and findings (Caldwell, 2009).

The study limited the number of participants, therefore; further research with more subjects would be needed to confirm the accuracy of the themes found and conclusions made.

Although authenticity theory was used, it was limited in two ways: 1) The researcher used only the lens of leadership and no other person-centered approaches and 2) The researcher
focused on only two of the four major areas of authenticity theory, self-awareness and authenticity. Self-knowledge and self-regulation were only given peripheral consideration in this study.

Different cultures place different emphasis and value on certain leadership behaviors and styles. Global leaders differ in their rating of their peers, subordinates, and superiors in a significant way depending on their culture. Therefore, it is important to point out that this study was focused on Western styles of leadership. Further research would need to be conducted to consider aspects of Eastern verses Western leadership or global leadership (Agrawal & Rook, 2014).

**Definition of terms**

**Self-awareness**

Self-awareness was the ability to perceive the inner workings of the self as one interacted with the world. This included awareness of and reflection on physiological responses, emotions, thoughts, drives, needs, or intuitive reactions. Self-awareness played an important role in motivation (Duval & Wicklund, 1972).

**Reflection**

Reflection was usually seen as an inwardly-focused evaluative process in which individuals made self-comparisons with the goal of better self-knowledge and improvement (Ashley & Reiter-Palmon, 2012; Leary & Tangney, 2003). An individual’s self-awareness was a reflective process used in the place of another person giving feedback (Ashley & Reiter-Palmon, 2012).
**Self-knowledge**

Self-knowledge was the degree to which a person had a developed self-concept that included personal capabilities, shortcomings, tendencies, beliefs, values, goals, and motivations. Self-knowledge was formed through meaning making, understanding, and construction of personal history and world view (Ricoeur, 1992). This framework included both positive and negative aspects of self and was similar to concepts offered by Roberts (2014), Kernis (2003), and Kernis and Goldman (2006). Self-awareness created self-knowledge that involved recognizing contradictory facets of self (Ilies, Morgenson, & Nahrgang 2005).

**Authentic behavior**

Authentic behavior was the individual’s open, outward demonstration of their true self. This behavior was free and unguarded or guided through self-regulation. It was alignment of action with values, beliefs, opinions, emotions, or disposition and other personal aspects of self (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2011).

**Learning**

Roeser and Peck (2009) wrote that the cultivation of awareness, reflection, and self-regulation were precursors of deep learning. We learned from mistakes through reflection within ourselves or by reflection on responses we elicited that included feedback from others (Karpman, 2012). The importance of feedback that resulted from our own reflection and growth from feedback was expressed by Dottin (1991):

> The person who simply conforms, who follows things the way they are, does not constantly inquire, does not constantly observe, does not constantly learn, i.e., acquire personal meaning, therefore is not constantly aware, thus may not constantly be educated.” (p.11).
Transformational Learning.

Transformational learning was learning that transformed problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open, and emotionally able to change. It provided a model for understanding how adults learn in various settings (Mezirow, 1991).

Feedback

Feedback was defined as a dynamic communication process that conveyed information regarding the receiver’s performance, thinking, or behavior in the accomplishment of a task or resolution of a problem. Feedback often provided information on immediate and recent behavior exhibited while attempting to reach a goal (Baker, Perreault, Reid, & Blanchard, 2013). Figure 3 shows the steps involved in the feedback process.

Figure 3. Model of the Effects of Feedback on Recipients.


Conscience

Conscience was the overlapping of moral law and behavior, an innate sense of justice, fairness, of right and wrong. It was the spiritual or moral nature of people independent of
religion or any particular culture, geography, nationality, or race. Conscience taught us that ends and means were inseparable (Covey, 2004).

**Leaders**

Successful experienced leaders had usually mastered their ability to communicate with others or mastered the art of deception (Axelrod, 2012). Knowing how to listen and reflect deeply was part of self-awareness proficiency: Self-aware leaders were known for listening better than those leaders with less developed self-awareness skills (Wolvin & Cookley, 1996) that often lead to deception and failed communication. The skill of sending and receiving feedback was an essential leadership capability that was directly attributed to leadership effectiveness (Ashley & Reiter-Palmon, 2012; Axelrod, 2012; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2001; Snowden, 2002). The experienced leaders in this study executed their roles under pressure. They had the sole responsibility for making major decisions that impacted their organizations, employees, customers, and clients.

**Self-deception**

Caldwell (2009) described self-deception as a skewing of our cognitive awareness in order to find a way to avoid pain and anxiety, a way to cope with life’s frustrations, and make sense out of things that are incongruous.

**Summary**

This study was organized into five chapters. This chapter provided an introduction to the study and background (problem of practice) for the study. Chapter two was a review of the seminal works on authenticity in leadership, leadership self-awareness, feedback mechanisms necessary to be self-aware, and information on self-deception that often results from self-awareness avoidance (Caldwell, 2009; Rose, Rouhani, & Fischer, 2013; Steiner, 2014). Two
tables (Table 1 and Table 2) were provided in chapter two to show the distinct elements of authenticity literature and associated scholars.

Chapter three defined the design and methodology employed to answer the research questions in this study. Included in chapter three were details of the participant population, information on interview question development, and procedures used in implementing the research and findings.

Chapter four presented the data that was collected and analysis of that data.

Chapter five, the final chapter, offered conclusions drawn from the research, recommendations for action, and suggestions for further research.
2. **Review of the Literature**

The purpose of this study was to document examples of self-awareness, an essential component of authentic behavior (Ashcroft 1989; Atwater and Yammarino, 1992; Steiner, 2014; Sosik, 2001; Roeser and Peck, 2009). Self-awareness was considered the most important trait in authentic leadership and yet there was very little documentation on self-aware behavior in the literature and even less advice on how to use the skill to achieve alignment and authenticity.

The findings of this study aimed to contribute to the development, expansion, and refinement of leadership self-awareness practices and leader training that encouraged authentic behavior. The literature review provided in this chapter offered sources of information that described and supported authenticity theory and its constructs as well as self-awareness theory. This review explored links between authenticity theory, and some of its components: self-awareness, feedback, deception, and leadership. Two tables (Table 1 and Table 2) were created to illustrate the different constructs of this study and the authors who used them in combination with each other to support their viewpoints. The literature review included a history of the study of self-awareness, seminal works and provided background information on leadership studies, self-awareness studies and advances. This review shared the progress of contemporary writers who specifically discussed self-awareness and authenticity. Following the review of contemporary authors, the chapter continued with literature on the specific constructs that were of major concern to this research: self-awareness, feedback, deception, and authentic leadership. Next were recommendations for teaching and obtaining self-awareness skills along with documented suggestions for further research. The chapter ended with literature about the challenges of being self-aware and insight into the possible reasons why authenticity was often difficult to achieve.
Leadership and Connections between Constructs

Self-awareness and feedback, leadership, and authenticity were individual threads which when woven together formed a fabric of constructs that supported this study. Successful leadership required self-awareness and self-awareness required feedback (Gregory, Beck, & Carr, 2011; Silvia & Duval, 2001). If leaders were to build relationships and create meaningful change, they had to spend time reflecting on and learning from their knowledge, skills, values, and feedback to and from others (Nesbit 2012; Steiner, 2014; Sosik, 2001).

Keith Grint (2011) wrote a history of leadership which included the progression from great man theory to distributed leadership theory. The field of study was large. According to Grint (2011), there were four main generations of identity theory: trait theory, behavioral theory, contingency theory, and transformational theory (Doyle & Smith, 2001; Goleman, & Boyatzis, 2008). According to Ashley and Reiter-Palmon (2012), seminal treatments of leadership identity dealt with self-awareness and were built from the work of psychologists and sociologists such as James (1890), Mead (1934), Cooley (1956), and Duval and Wicklund (1972). Through a psychological or sociological lens, modern scholars who built on these seminal works found self-awareness to be a critical part of being a successful leader (Ashley, & Reiter-Palmon, 2012; Gardner, Fischer, & Hunt, 2009; Goleman, & Boyatzis, 2008; Hassan, & Ahmed., 2011; Whitney & D’Andrea, 2007). The importance of self-awareness in leadership was evident not only by the massive number of scholarly articles available but articles available on the topic on the internet and as subjects in popular culture. In popular culture, there was a focus on leaders and their personalities. Successful television shows like The House of Cards was an example of how our society became fascinated with leaders and their often corrupt and misaligned identity that enabled them to rise to the top. In The House of Cards, the audience was presented with the
moral and ethical identity issues of leaders in the United States as majority whip Francis Underwood rose through the chain of command to the oval office using any means necessary. It did not matter who he had to hurt to get there, and he stopped at nothing to succeed. Features like The New Yorker Corner Office provided readers with snippets from the lives of successful leaders that allowed visibility into pieces of their identity. Forbes Magazine was filled with articles like the one published in 2010 entitled Why Leadership Matters. In this article, Erin Schreyer wrote about leaders needing to tell the truth, be inspirational, visionary, compassionate, and foster trust. Fast Company had three sections of their website that were filled with articles about leadership self-awareness in the areas like mentoring, coaching, personality traits of a leader, identity, and power. Popular literature was full of advice on how leaders could present and regulate their self-awareness in a way that allowed them to be “great” (Sinclair, 2011) and project an authentic persona that made their identity attractive and/or subject to reinvention. Pressures from media channels and success metrics added to the pressure on leaders to produce a coherent, convincing sense of themselves (Sinclair, 2011).

The findings from most of these works, academic and non-academic alike led to recommendations to enhance self-awareness, authenticity, conscience and reflection (Glenberg, 2010). The definition of self-awareness seemed to match that of Ickes, Wicklund, and Ferris (1973): (a) a recognition of internal and external standards, (b) a recognition of one’s positive and negative attributes/abilities, (c) a desire for introspective and self-reflective thought, and (d) a desire for accurately detecting gaps in personal behaviors, traits, and goal progress. Covey (2004) wrote about conscience being at the center for anyone leading a powerful life. He saw conscience as the difference between integrity, and successful leadership and immature interplay of ego-driven rulers. Covey (2004) described conscience as subordinating one’s ego for a higher
purpose, cause, or principle. He defined it as the overlapping of moral law and behavior, an innate sense of justice, fairness, of right and wrong. It was the spiritual or moral nature of people independent of religion or any particular culture, geography, nationality, or race. Conscience taught us that ends and means were inseparable (Covey, 2004).

Emerging leadership studies recognized that leadership had outgrown its former incarnation as a series of tasks, characteristics, and traits (Sinclair, 2011; Goleman and Boyatzis, 2008). Goleman and Boyatzis (2008) posited that leadership was less about mastering situations or even social skill sets and more about developing interest and talent and positive feelings in the people with whom you worked. This was made evident in academic literature, social media, and the emergence of social identity theory (SIT).

Emerging leadership theory suggested an effective way of becoming a leader was to find authentic contexts in which to learn social behavior (Goleman and Boyatzis, 2008; Sinclair, 2011). This was known as social identity theory (SIT). Scott (2007), and Alvesson, Ashcraft, & Thomas (2008), discussed identity in terms of integration of communication with social identity theory. Scott (2007) wrote that it is through communication with others that we expressed our belongingness or lack thereof and created social identity. He described the lack of social identity as disidentification and posited that a lack of connection to certain social entities led to lack of trust. Disidentification made interactions with others challenging, was disruptive, and sometimes malicious (Scott, 2007). Sinclair (2011) remarked that disidentification was a result of “pressure to be a certain self”. Sinclair (2011) mentioned SIT as being a substantial body of social psychological research that advised leaders on how to create their identities to match the needs of their followers and as a result, increase motivation. The goal was not to discover self but to get better at identity-in-action.
Leadership identity literature in the past five years often described identity from the perspective of ethics, mindfulness, and followership. Almost all were tightly linked to leadership authenticity and self-awareness (Glenberg, 2010; Komvies, Own, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005; Odom, Boyd, & Williams, 2012; Spitzmuller & Ilies, 2010; Steiner, 2014). Some of these authors built on the ideas from Scott (2007) and Sinclair (2011) and suggested that without self-awareness, leaders would fall into self-deception and disidentification that could create misinformed followers (Caldwell, 2009; Scott, 2007; Sinclair, 2011; Steiner, 2014). Komvies et al. (2005) and Whitney and D’Andrea, (2007) viewed leadership identity as a cycle: developing self, group influences, changing view of self with others, broadening view, and creating identity. Whitney, and D’Andrea, (2007) coached leaders through a leadership identity model that was built from the work of Komvies et al. (2005) where stages included 1) potential, 2) testing, 3) catalyzing, 4) acceptance, and 5) synthesis. The potential stage began when someone realized that they had an identity to become a leader. The testing phase involved trying, succeeding, or failing on some leadership endeavor that used current identity. The catalyst phase was an event that pointed to some struggle and potential change between new and old identity. Acceptance involved a form of energy that validated the identity changes in the leader. Synthesis was a sudden awakening and an acceptance by the group that validated a leadership accomplishment. Odam, Boyd, and Williams (2012) built on the work of Komvies et al. (2005) through the study of students and how they went through the five stages to develop a leadership identity.

Like the study of leadership in general, the study of leadership self-awareness and authenticity had a vast theoretical footprint that contained a relatively small amount of academic study and knowledge from practice (Mohrman & Lawler, 2012; Zaccaro, 2007). As with general
leadership studies, for leadership self-awareness and authenticity theory to become relevant, it needed to be combined with practice (Mohrman & Lawler, 2012; Zaccaro, 2007). This was especially true when studying psychological and physiological issues like identity (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008; Mohrman & Lawler, 2012). As a result, the literature was light on lived examples and prescription on how leaders could develop their identity, get in touch with who they were, and become self-aware and reflective of their own actions (Vago & Silbersweig, 2012).

There seemed to be a paradoxical lack of information in the literature for the critical disconnect most of leaders had with themselves (Glenberg, 2010). Self-awareness was discussed but mostly without the realization that a lot of work was needed in this area. There was also a strong, recurrent belief in the connection between identity and social identity theory, self-awareness, and reflection. Without self-awareness focused on one’s leadership abilities, self-identity as a leader does not form (Bennis, 2007; Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998; Whitney, & D’Andrea, 2007).

Questions arose about being in denial about the issue of self-awareness. Have we been only semi-conscious about the consequences of not paying more attention to this issue? Have we been missing an opportunity (McMasters, 1999)? Authors who touched on the subject of self-awareness did not seem to be able to capture the depth and critical nature of the problem of disidentification and the catastrophic results of not having solutions (Glenberg, 2010, McMasters, 1999). Leaders who were often prisoners of their identity processes needed ways to selectively resist and reflect on this problem (Sinclair, 2011). There needed to be a commitment to identity reconstruction through self-awareness (Glenberg, 2010; Komvies, Own, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005; Odom, Boyd, & Williams, 2012; Spitzmuller & Ilies, 2010; Steiner, 2014).
Values that underscored many models of leadership acted as an indication to leaders that they should regularly reflect on the alignment of their principles and actions (McMasters, 1999; Wicklund, 1979). In the absence of significant alignment, known as authentic behavior, a leader might have been able to accomplish tasks or rally a team but creating meaningful and lasting transformation within oneself or organization necessitated significant self-awareness (Ashcroft, 1989; Atwater and Yammarino, 1992; Steiner, 2014; Sosik, 2001).

Roeser and Peck (2009) wrote that the cultivation of self-awareness, reflection, and self-regulation were precursors of deep learning. We learned from mistakes through reflection within ourselves or by reflection on responses we elicited including feedback from others (Karpman, 2012).

Learning that transformed problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open, and emotionally able to change was considered transformational self-awareness. Transformational self-awareness pointed to a learning model for understanding how adults learned in various settings (Mezirow, 1991). The author Mezirow (1991) also referred to this as perspective transformation. He defined perspective transformation as an understanding and awareness of the constraints within which we operated that colored the way we felt about our world. Perspective transformation involved changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive and integrative perspective, finally making choices or otherwise acting on these new understandings (Mezirow, 1991, p.167).

Self-awareness was a key aspect of learning, required for the transformative learning that facilitated the development of new perspectives (Mezirow, 2000). Mezirow (2000) discussed subjective reframing that occurred when an individual who was self-aware reflected on personal assumptions and then using intense emotion, effort, existing perspectives, and attitude,
challenged these assumptions and changes their behavior. Mezirow (2001) considered this the
deepest level of learning and called it perspective transformation. According to Mezirow (1991),
perspective transformation was defined as:

- The process of becoming critically aware of how and why our presuppositions
  have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our
  world; of reformulating these assumptions to permit a more inclusive,
  discrimination, permeable, and integrative perspective; and making decisions
  or otherwise acting upon these new understandings (p.14).

Not all self-awareness led to transformational learning. Not all learning was reflective.
For example, learners engaged in rote memorization acquired information but failed to acquire
new meaning or shift their perspective. Self-awareness was an essential component of learning
that moved individuals beyond their current frame of reference toward deeper understanding
(Ashcroft 1989; Atwater and Yammarino, 1992; Steiner, 2014; Sosik, 2001; Roeser and Peck,
2009). Learning was a significant component of leadership. Leadership was considered a
complex phenomenon that required investment in learning about self and the people with whom
the self collaborated (Nesbit, 2012).

Leaders addressed significant challenges that required adaptive thinking that moved
beyond a technical solution. Because of the inherent complexity and the continuously shifting
nature of problems, leadership was considered a lifelong learning process (Mezirow, 2001).

Transformative learning could not occur without being self-aware (Nesbit 2012; Sosik,
2001). Leaders could not consistently address complex problems without learning that led to
perspective transformation (Nesbit 2012; Sosik, 2001). Self-awareness and feedback, both in
complex situations as well as in individual values, shaped the leadership development process
(Nesbit 2012; Sosik, 2001).

Table 1 and Table 2 below present the seminal authors whose works provided various constructs in establishing the importance of authenticity in leaders, self-awareness, and learning.
Table 1.  
*Elements of Authenticity-Matrix by Seminal Author*

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Table 2.  
*Detailed Components of Authenticity Matrix by Seminal Author*

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<td>Self-directed</td>
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<td>Awareness of strengths &amp; weaknesses</td>
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<td>Feedback seeking behavior</td>
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<td>Authentic behavior</td>
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<td>Servant</td>
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<td>Authentic Relationships</td>
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<td>Open/transparent</td>
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<td>Self-disclosing</td>
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<td>Sense-making</td>
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<td>Deep understanding</td>
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<td>Chaos and Complexity</td>
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History and Seminal Works

There has been a long-standing and cross-cultural interest in self-awareness by philosophers, social scientists, clinicians, and leadership theorists (Ashley & Reiter-Palmon, 2012). Writings on the self were known to be from India as early as 600 BC and China as early as 500 BC (Ashley & Reiter-Palmon, 2012). Theological and religious texts were the areas that covered self-awareness for nearly two millennia where authors analyzed spiritual and philosophical insight and behaviors that led to immoral behaviors. The first psychological discussion did not appear until William James (1890). Although Freud’s (1913, 1914) views on the unconscious aspects of the self inspired, the field of psychology to become highly concerned with self-alienation and issues connected with operating from a false self, the coverage of the topic of self-awareness in a scientifically relevant way was spotty during the early to mid-20th century with the only significant scientific contributions coming from Cooley (1902), Mead (1934), Faris (1937), and Blumer (1937). Horney (1942, 1951) was identified as creating seminal research on the self in her research on social and external causes of self-alienation. Horney proposed that solutions for neuroticism contributed to greater self-realization, an older term for self-awareness. In 1959, Goffman stimulated another round of research with his metaphoric approach to understanding life in society as actors on a stage. Goffman questioned reality and our understanding of who we were. Ever since, the topic was caught in the quagmire of behavioral and social sciences attempting to agree on how to define the concept of self (Leary & Tangney, 2003).

The importance of self-awareness and the necessity of avoiding self-deception have been recognized for thousands of years (Ashley & Reiter-Palmon, 2012). According to many prominent authors, self-awareness was an important skill, trait, and direction for learning, having a successful career, and for being a leader (Kolb, 1984; Ashcroft 1989; Aron, 2000; Atwater and Yammarino, 1992; Gregory, Beck, & Carr, 2011; Joseph, 2006; Kombarakaran, Baker, Yang, & Fernandes. 2008; McMasters, 1999; Nesbit 2012; Sosik, 2001; Steiner, 2014; Tsui & Ashford, 1994; Watkin, 2000; Wegner 1980; Wicklund 1979).

**Self-Awareness**

The literature on self-awareness stemmed from the seminal studies of Duval & Wicklund (1972) the founders of objective self-awareness theory (OSA) and Atwater & Yammarino (1992) who were seminal in their study of self-awareness in leaders. Goleman (1995) built OSA into emotional intelligence theory, and promoted the importance of self-awareness. Goleman found the self-awareness construct to be the most important trait in leaders. (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2001).

Emotional intelligence (EI) had long been known to improve performance. The model introduced by Daniel Goleman focused on EI as a wide array of competencies and skills that drove leadership performance. Goleman's model outlined four main EI constructs:
1. Self-awareness – the ability to know one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, drives, values and goals and recognize their impact on others while using gut feelings to guide decisions. Self-awareness was the most essential of the emotional intelligence competencies.

2. Self-management – controlling or redirecting one's disruptive emotions and impulses and adapting to changing circumstances. It included displaying honesty and integrity and flexibility in adapting to changing situations.

3. Social awareness empathy - considered other people's feelings especially when making decisions. Sensing developmental needs of others and bolstering their abilities was part of this construct as was recognizing and meeting customer needs.

4. Relationship management or social skills – the management of relationships to move people in a desired direction was included in this construct as was sending clear and convincing messages, resolving disagreements, and inspiring and guiding groups of people. Also part of this construct was initiating or managing change, nurturing instrumental relationships, and creating a shared vision working with others towards shared goals (Gowing, 2001).

Goleman included a set of emotional competencies within each construct of EI. Emotional competencies were not innate talents, but rather learned capabilities that had to be worked on and could be developed to achieve outstanding performance. Goleman (1998) posited that individuals were born with a general emotional intelligence that determined their potential for learning emotional competencies.
Most leaders had to have a high degree of emotional intelligence. Without it, a person could have the best training, good ideas, an analytical mind but they still will not make a good leader (Goleman, 1995). Goleman grouped capabilities into three categories:

1. Purely technical skills like programming or planning,
2. Cognitive abilities like analysis, and
3. Emotional intelligences such as the abilities that led to change and the ability to work with others.

Based on years of statistical analysis, it was determined that emotional intelligence was twice as important as technical skills or cognitive abilities.

Self-awareness was the first component of emotional intelligence. According to Goleman (1998) it meant having a deep understanding of one’s emotions, strengths, weaknesses, needs, and drives. A self-aware person was honest with themselves and with others. They knew how their feelings affected them and others around them. It extended to values and goals. They
knew where they were headed and way. It showed itself as candor. People with high self-awareness were able to speak accurately and openly about their emotions. Self-aware people were comfortable talking about their limitations and strengths. They had a desire for constructive criticism and feedback. A self-aware person knew when to ask for help. They took risks that were reasonable. They had a firm grasp of their capabilities (Goleman, 1998).

Self-awareness could be traced to the issues of contemporary leadership current writers. Axelrod (2012), Gardner, Cogliser, Davis, & Dickens (2011), Prati, Douglas, & Ferris (2003), Nesbit (2012), and Sparrowe (2005) covered leadership and learning in terms of complexity and chaos, the impact on teams, and the complexity of organizational behavior. Higgs and Rowland (2010) posited that leaders needed to be self-aware to understand the extent to which their own behavior contributed to ability or a lack thereof to make change, something they asserted was a key component of leadership.

According to McMasters (1999), there were many acceptable definitions of awareness. McMaster’s own preferred definition of self-awareness in her 1999 study was: The ability to perceive the inner workings of the self as one interacted with the world. This included awareness of and reflection on physiological responses, emotions, thoughts, drives, needs, or intuitive reactions. Merriam-Webster defined self-awareness as “the awareness of one’s own personality or individuality.” Another definition was expansion of experience coming from consciousness that increased complexity coming from chaos (McMasters, 1999; Mezirow, 1991) or one’s ability to self-observe (Wicklund, 1970), or to accurately compare one’s behavior to a standard (Atwater and Yammarino, 1992).

According to Duval and Wicklund (1972), self-awareness played an important role in motivation. The authors further asserted that problems with motivation could occur when an
individual realized that they were not adequately living up to their personal standards or ideals. This evaluation in itself required self-awareness to occur and was an example of how negative aspects of self can put accurate self-awareness at risk (Caldwell, 2009). Self-awareness was the psychological mechanism that enabled this level of reflection. According to Morin (2006) the literature suggested that “although people think they know themselves, in actuality, they don’t.” (p.10). The reasons were motivational according to Morin (2006): “People are self-serving and need self-enhancement and self-inflation to protect their self-esteem. This distorts self-information and lead to erroneous self-perception.” (p.10)

Private assessments were constantly being made when individuals reflected upon internal conflicts that challenged them. To be aware was to be willing to learn new things (McMasters, 1999; Mezirow, 1991). This happened when we listened to ourselves and others in new ways (Wolvin & Coakley, 1996). This capacity was seen as allowing people to evaluate alternatives, identify problems, and progress towards goals. Cognitive self-awareness was the process of thoughtfully examining the consistency of behaviors so that beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and motivations that led to self-deception could be explored (Taylor & Bright, 2011).

Many leadership theorists included self-awareness as one of the most important traits needed to be a successful leader (Axelrod, 2012; Boyatzis, 2007; Collins, 2001; Collins & Porras, 2004; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2001; Sparrowe, 2005; Sosik & Megerian, 1999; Tsui & Ashford, 1994; Walumbwa et. al., 2002). A growing body of empirical research suggested that self-awareness was associated with successful adulthood (Kolb 1984; Aron, 2000; Joseph 2006; McMaster, 1999; Tsui & Ashford, 1994; Watkin 2000). Experts in academia and in industry have acknowledged that self-awareness was key to learning as well as organization
effectiveness (Boyatzis, 2007; Collins, 2001; Collins and Porras, 2004; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2001; Mezirow, 1991).

One of the habits of people across all societies and social strata was seeing foundation, the basis of something or origin of something such as a thought, action, or idea, in places other than themselves—seeing themselves as a synthesizing center (McMasters, 1999). Because of this, interpretation could get confused with reality. Lack of awareness of inner activity could block the realization that life was about the choices we made from this inner place. If there was self-awareness, in each moment, selection or choice could be made on what was experienced (McMasters, 1999).

When a self-aware person had found self-acceptance from within, they were not easily embarrassed or surprised by positive praise from others and were more likely to take it in. Likewise, when they accepted their faults and bad traits, they were not easily surprised or defensive when they heard criticism (McMasters, 1999). In this way, leaders had the ability to use self-awareness to reflect on their perceptions about themselves and use these perceptions to construct understanding of what they thought others thought of them (Goleman, 2003; McMasters, 1999). Only then could leaders lead in a way that diverted from the artificially-constructed perceptions that had come to be known as self-deception (Rose, Rouhani, & Fischer, 2013).

In 1992 Leanne Atwater and Francis Yammarino conducted a test of self-awareness of military leaders and by doing so, initiated a new area of research that calls attention to a different way of thinking about and understanding the self-awareness concept. Our understanding of leadership self-awareness could be seen as being formed by this study. Atwater and Yammarino (1992) conducted a quantitative study of 158 navy officers and 793 subordinates who rated the
officers. The team wanted to see if self-awareness was a good moderator of over-estimation and under-estimation of leader effectiveness based on a comparison of their own self-assessment with those of superiors and subordinates. Not only was self-awareness shown to be a moderating factor, the authors claim that the primary implication of their study was that the level to which one was self-aware could be considered a prediction for leader success. They found that individuals with high self-awareness skills were more reliable in their reports on themselves. They were more likely to seek and retain personally relevant information. They found that the ratings between self-aware leaders and their subordinates tended to be more aligned than that of less self-aware leaders. The implication of these findings was that those who have accurate insight into their own leadership behavior were more likely to be successful leaders.

Since the Atwater and Yammarino (1992) study, the self-awareness construct was further observed, described, and tested. As authors experimented and studied, they searched to position the construct within a leadership framework or wondered if it belonged there at all. There was a return of the original authors, Atwater and Yammarino in 1995, when they combined their original findings using a lateral approach that included both upward feedback, originating from subordinates, and downward feedback, originating with their participants’ senior management.

Between 1992 and 1994, Tsui and Ashford (1994) took the idea of self-awareness from Atwater and Yammarino, and used it as a possible replacement for what they referred to as system-wide control or management. They saw self-awareness as a way to improve management effectiveness and at the same time, reduce process defects. The idea gained traction and importance, so much so that Atwater, Roush, & Fischthal (1995) developed and expanded the research by adding to their self-awareness component, upward feedback and effects. Their studies used student leaders who showed improvement as a result of feedback.
In 1998 Daniel Goleman wrote his ground-breaking book, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*. This work shared that self-awareness was one of the most important facets of emotional intelligence (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2001; Ashley & Reiter-Palmon, 2012; Snowden, 2002). McMasters (1999) provided an in-depth explanation of how new information threatened old patterns. The McMasters (1999) thesis was that we often do not realize that we can absorb something new to our advantage and by doing so, expand our awareness. According to McMasters (1999), we did not realize that the only things that can affect us were the things we consciously chose to have affect us or the things that our subconscious chose to have affect us, but which our conscious mind elected to hide or leave unrecognized.

To bring about transformation, McMasters (1999) suggested that change needed to be more about transforming ourselves than trying to modify others. We were the only ones who could decide what we would experience. It was in the meaning of experience, what we did with that meaning and the way we incorporated it into the way we perceived the past and future that we created our reality. It was the meaning which drove our view of self in the world. This took a burden off of others and left one looking at themselves and taking total responsibility for their feelings and actions, successes and failures. At this point, there was no one else around to blame (McMasters, 1999).

In 2001, Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee produced their next work documenting two years of research on self-awareness. Their paper provided deeper analysis of the moods and behaviors of leaders. This team of authors determined that the disposition of leaders drive team disposition. They discussed the science of moods and how moods affected the brain. The findings of Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2001), resulted in the idea that moods and emotional states of leaders were significant enough to be discussed by leaders and their followers
in the workplace. Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee (2001) dug deeper into the idea of self-discovery. They explored happiness, how it made a difference in productivity, and how one might learn to be happy. They connected crisis situations with self-awareness skills and showed how self-awareness could assist with reduction of conflict.

Chris Watkin (2000) developed a new and interesting way to frame self-awareness using the emotional intelligence framework. He focused on the idea of recognizing one’s own feelings and those of others and self-awareness was a key to motivation and managing emotions. Watkin (2000) applied these findings to the field of sales where his findings supported the premise that self-awareness had implications for the effectiveness of leaders of a sales staff.

Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee (2001) singled out self-awareness as the most important emotional intelligence attribute for leaders. In a 2002 paper, Snowden refuted the concept of reengineering, the primary leadership construct of the time, replacing it with the concept of emotional intelligence, a key component of which was knowledge. Snowden specifically called out self-awareness as a key part of knowing and saw knowing as a result of self-awareness. He claimed that knowledge, both implicit and explicit, was important and was lost through the staff reductions of the reengineering process. Any efficiency gained through reengineering was not sufficient if a person or organization lost effectiveness because of lost knowledge. Snowden wrote about the increased complexity of business and how human nature played a part. Prati, Douglas, & Ferris (2003) brought teamwork into the leadership discussion and used team outcomes as a measure of leader effectiveness. Human nature was an area left out by reengineering and picked up by emotional intelligence. Prati, Douglas, & Ferris (2003) went into greater detail on leadership and self-awareness and included how self-awareness influenced
motivation and trust. This team connected charismatic leadership and transformational leadership with emotional intelligence and self-awareness.

In 2008, Walumbwa, who was part of the Garder et al. (2005) team, created a team that built on the studies of self-awareness by Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee (2001), Sparrow (2005) and Gardner et al. (2005) by changing the scope of self-awareness to a more global focus. This team of authors compared, reconciled, and consolidated emotional intelligence and self-awareness in ethical and transformational leadership models using participants in China and Africa in addition to the United States. They stated that internalized moral perspectives impacted balanced processing and offered a new tool for measuring self-awareness.

Self-awareness became the subject of study for Morin (2006) who built on Mead (1934) and Duval and Wicklund (1972) to define levels of self-awareness. The work of Morin (2006) was a major input into the codes and themes used in the data analysis of this study.

Morin (2006) described the lowest level of consciousness as processing information in the environment and intelligently responding to stimuli. A merely conscious individual would experience perceptions, sensations, thoughts, etc. without being aware that mental events were taking place. They were totally immersed in their experience. This is an “unreflective actor in one’s environment” (Morin, 2006, p.2). According to Morin’s next level, one experienced mental events such as having pain, tasting, or seeing. Morin’s third level referred to self-awareness as public self-awareness. This involved visible attributes such as behavior and physical appearance. Next was private self-awareness which consisted of characteristics such as emotions, sensations, perceptions, values, goals, and motives. It was considered a higher level of self-awareness because it was more conceptual. According to Morin (2006), the next and highest level of self-awareness was meta-self-awareness or being aware that one was aware. Morin
(2006, p.2) described this level as “the capacity to become the object of one’s own attention.” An individual having access to their own opinions, values, goals, and self-memories could be said to have a higher level of self-awareness. An example of this stage would be “I’m aware of feeling vulnerable” or “I am currently analyzing my current state of feeling vulnerable.” Morin (2006) described self-awareness and meta-self-awareness as knowing that we were the same person across time and that we were the creator of our thoughts and actions. Morin (2006) suggested that people, who engaged in frequent self-observation such as celebrities, were likely to attain higher levels of self-awareness compared to individuals who did not.

The writers on the subject of self-awareness made it clear that self-awareness was important and that obtaining self-awareness skills was a priority. However, the literature explaining how to acquire and use this skill was relatively thin.

**Objective self-awareness**

Objective self-awareness (OSA) theory was concerned with the reflective quality of consciousness or the ability to comprehend existence of self along with existence of environment. OSA theory was created by Duval and Wicklund who published their first article on the topic in 1972. According to Duval and Wicklund (1972) when an individual’s consciousness was focused on the self, the self became the object of his or her consciousness. This was seen as initiating an automatic comparison of the self against standards. A standard was defined as an understanding of correct behavior, attitudes, and traits. All standards, taken together, define what was “correct” and what a “correct person is” (Duval & Wicklund, 1972, pp. 3, 4). OSA theory was a system of connecting self, standards, and focus. If a discrepancy appeared, the person was said to have been motivated to restore consistency. Restoring consistency meant that people either changed their actions, attitudes, or traits, or avoided self-
focusing information altogether. Whether people chose change or avoidance primarily depended on whether they felt they could effectively reduce the discrepancy. Another factor considered was whether the discrepancy was viewed as large or small. The approach selected was determined by outcome favorability and determination of a person’s rate of progress in discrepancy reduction.

Early self-awareness research showed that self-focused people saw themselves as more responsible for both positive and negative events than people who were less self-aware (Duval & Wicklund, 1972). Subsequent findings found that self-awareness can promote defensiveness when focused on negative events.

Many studies showed that people would try to change the self to reduce discrepancy (Duval, T. S., Duval, V. H., & Mulilis, J.P., 1992). An alternative outcome was the change or redefining of a standard. This would occur when people focused attention on the standard and the way it did not accurately describe reality or contribute to a better sense of the self’s place in reality (Silvia & Duval, 2001). The effect of self-awareness on attempts to meet standards was seen as the main effect of OSA theory and has been demonstrated in over a hundred experiments.

To best represent research on self-awareness, this study concentrated on feedback behaviors important to being self-aware (Silvia & Duval, 2001).

**Feedback**

Self-doubt often came from a lack of connection with our selves. It was at times of self-doubt that feedback played an important role. If one was self-aware, one could use awareness as a feedback mechanism to learn and make accurate changes in their life that truthfully represented not only what they believed was acceptable but appropriate to others as well (Rose, Rouhani, & Fischer, 2013).
Figure 5. Model of Feedback Processing

Feedback was covered by many authors including Goleman (1998) and Karpman (2012) who posited that learning often occurred as a result of mistakes that we acknowledged through reflection or by reflection on responses we elicited including feedback from others (Goleman, 1998; Karpman, 2012).

Around the year 2000, we began to see the concept of self-awareness combined with feedback and tested in other fields such as nursing and sales. Bowles and Bowles (2000) expanded the self-awareness study to the field of nursing by studying nursing management. They found self-awareness useful in the workplace because it validated the feedback findings of Atwater & Yammarino (1992) and Atwater, Roush, & Fischthal (1995). They developed additional research that measured self-awareness and when someone was likely to seek and act upon feedback.

Ashford and Cummings (1983) were considered seminal authors on feedback seeking behavior (FSB). FSB posited that feedback on learning and task performance (performance goal orientation) positively affected behavior because it reduced uncertainty. Anseel, Beatty, Shen, Lievens, & Sackett (2013) built on this work by comparing feedback inquiry verses feedback monitoring. Their findings included an assessment of the value of feedback and determined that feedback was considered valuable when it outweighed the possible cost. Cost was often considered before feedback inquiry and impacted what they referred to as feedback orientation:
an individual’s overall receptivity to feedback. The use of feedback had to be more important than concern for self-image for feedback to be seen as positive. This team of authors found that the cost of feedback would be higher for someone with low self-esteem because there was the potential for detrimental impact. This team of authors also discovered that the source of feedback influenced the credibility of the information being received. The better the relationship, the more likely the feedback was seen as valuable. Feedback also allowed for corrections over time. Feedback needed to be received accurately to have a positive impact, deeper cognitive processing, and more long-term results.

Multisource 360 feedback was used to assess and provide feedback for managers and leaders (Shull, 2010; Pelgrim, Krame, Mokkink, & van der Vleuten, 2012). Shull (2010) and Pelgrim et al. (2012) found that awareness of self and others was related to performance. Leaders learned more quickly and with greater specificity how to change by being aware of gaps in self and other’s perceptions of their behavior from multisource feedback (Shull, 2010). Shull, 2010 built on the work of Atwater and Yammarino, (1992) in finding that people with a positive self-image who encountered discrepant self-perceptions were less likely to attribute negative characteristics to situational factors and were more likely to take personal responsibility. This positive perception of behavior influenced employee attitudes and perceptions of the organization which influenced customers and ultimately impacted financial performance (Shull, 2010).

**Deception**

Not being self-aware could cause problems in many ways (Caldwell, 2009). Deception could appear as something that forced one to take on new activities with old patterns, keeping awareness from them. Self-deception might look like a tendency to believe that one’s
perceptions were so correct that one held onto them even in the face of conflicting information (McMasters, 1999). It could manifest as becoming increasingly hard to admit that one might be wrong or worse still, to admit that one might be living a fantasy (McMasters, 1999; Rose, Rouhani, & Fischer, 2013). Under stress, individuals tended to lean to cognitive self-awareness dysfunction (Boyatzis, 2007) exposing themselves to possible bouts of self-deception. This manifested as discrepancies between the way in which one knew one should behave and the ways in which one actually did behave (Festinger, 1957). This often led to feedback-avoiding behavior (Moss and Sanchez, 2004) which could have a negative effect in the way in which one gathered evidence and reached conclusions (Kunda, 1990). Caldwell (2009) and Steiner (2014) described self-deception as a skewing of cognitive awareness in order to find a way to avoid pain and anxiety, a way to cope with life’s frustrations, and make sense out of things that are incongruous. An understanding of one’s self allowed awareness of blind-spots that could distort reality, impair relationships, and negatively impact the quality of decision making. “A large and diversified body of literature suggested that although people think they know themselves, in actuality they don’t.” (Morin, 2006, p.10).

Without self-awareness skills, thinking could be distorted by self-deception (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992; Leary & Tangney, 2003; Rose, Rouhani, & Fischer, 2013). Self-deception was the thought process resulting from a lack of self-awareness that could often lead someone to be misinformed and cause them to miscommunicate, mislearn and misinform others. People who were not engaged in the self-awareness process usually could not give or take feedback in a constructive manner. They were often defensive and evasive. Their view of themselves did not correspond with reality. Everyone around them was to blame and none of the responsibility for their circumstances belonged to them. These were typical characteristics of people who lacked
Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee (2001) explained the three steps to self-deception: 1) The mind sought to protect itself from anxiety; 2) This caused a blind-spot or zone of blocked attention; 3) The mind unconsciously warped reality to create a version of reality that reduced anxiety. It was only when we made a conscious effort to explore ourselves and our views of the world and acknowledge stress and conflict that we were likely to reduce our levels of self-deception and denial of reality.

McMasters (1999) wrote about the many reasons why self-awareness was difficult. Four of her major points were as follows: 1) Awareness brought into view one’s lack of awareness, avoidance, and deception from the past. One could lose some semblance of comfort about what one knew and could often be left feeling confused as one’s perceived understanding of their world unraveled and one began to feel they were no longer connected to what they knew as their flow of thinking and feeling. 2) One’s perspective of themselves could leave them feeling inadequate and unsure of how they needed to relate to others. 3) One could become aware of how many of their communication behaviors produced consistency rather than flexibility. People tended to hold onto attitudes that worked to maintain the status quo, for example, using stereotypes that grouped people in ways that could be damaging. One’s thoughts could also work to put ideas in categories and shut out new potentials instead of drawing out new ideas. 4) When one was able to take on a new idea, one was redefined in a small way (Dottin, 1991; McMasters, 1999). These small changes could lead to major shifts and bigger changes in one’s life that often felt threatening to their current knowledge. In research, affirming self through self-awareness induced a constant effort to run away from individuality and annihilate one’s own presence because of disaffirming memories (McMasters, 1999). “Feeling the need to account for
ourselves, our emotions, and our behavior has always seemed like a painful process—one that ultimately would bring blame, failure, and perhaps even shame.” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 1013).

According to McMasters (1999), it was difficult to relate to others when we were deceptive. According to Caldwell (2009), self-deception came from a lack of connection to ourselves and a lack of training in connecting who we were as the source of our lives with our own personal wisdom. One way we developed confidence was through intrapersonal awareness. For example, if our awareness was inaccurate, we could fail to recognize that we had a poor self-image. By ignoring external messages that we perceived and communicated to others, reflections or manifestations of our inner selves could turn deceptive and damaging. This could put a person’s intrapersonal system in danger. (Caldwell, 2009).

Kunda (1990) presented this as a problem in leadership. In discovering that one’s perceptions might be wrong, it was possible to lead people to preferred conclusions rather than accurate ones. Just the discovery that one might be wrong caused an increase in the intensity of cognitive processing, and that extra processing could potentially turn up new evidence that was more congenial to one’s directional goals rather than information based on accuracy (Newman, 1999). This was also known as a faulty preconception or self-deception that could manifest by creating deception towards self and others, discounting failure, an unwillingness to deal with uncertainty, inability to understand, a desire for a different reality, and intentional averting of attention.

One’s reason for denial was often “undiscussable” information that was tacitly off limits for examination (Schein 2006). This was another barrier to becoming self-aware. Maslow (1962) talked about self-deception being used because we were afraid of a reality that might
cause us to feel mediocre, weak, insignificant, immoral, shameful, or make us despise ourselves. The more “undiscussable” events we perceived in our past, the more self-deception we engaged in, and the more chances we had to create a warped view of reality. This tended to cause us to blame others for circumstances rather than take responsibility (Boyatzis, 2007). An inability to define reality in terms of emotions and relationships was particularly destructive for leaders (Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R., & McKee, A., 2001).

Many scholars considered it a fact of life or part of our social reality that there were inconsistencies between how one saw oneself compared to the view of others. This manifested as gaps between perceptions and feedback (Leary & Tangney, 2003; McMasters, 1999). One’s identity and one’s reality as adults could be seen as a result of social constructionism. The tie from self-awareness to social constructionism went back to Crescimanno (1982) who wrote “The reality of everyday life is largely a social creation and the result of knowing the world through an intellectualized process of symbolic interaction.” (Crescimanno, 1982, p. ix). Crescimanno (1982) posited that human or natural events were experiences that were not known in their entirety by any one individual. There was no way to know if what one thought was real was in agreement with the view of reality of someone else. One only knew what one’s perceptions told them if they were aware of these perceptions. Cognitive studies showed that one could carry a physical form of social or physical experience in the brain, an actual pathway between synapses or regions of the brain, if the experience had been traumatic or emotional (Goleman, 2003). If one only knew what one perceived, one needed specially honed self-awareness skills in order to lead others through the perceptual maze of life.

If one were not be able to control the consequences of their awareness then perhaps one could take some comfort in their commitment to a responsive attitude and deliberate will to
change as one confronted emerging problems and possibilities across the different contexts within which one acted. One decided what one would experience. This took a burden off of our selves but it also could leave one looking at only one’s self when one was angry. At that point, there was no one else around to blame (McMasters, 1999).

**Authentic Leadership**

Authentic behavior was defined as the individual’s open, outward demonstration of their true self. This behavior was free and unguarded or guided though self-regulation. It was acting in accordance values, beliefs, opinions, emotions, or disposition and other personal aspects of self. A self-aware individual behaving authentically may have been aware of consequences but their behavior was not dictated by external forces. It originated from within (Ashley & Reiter-Palmon, 2012; McMasters, 1999; Roberts, 2014) and was demonstrated through authentic behavior. The authenticity framework was a multidimensional concept (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2011) that was constructed from more than one key component. These components, psychological, physiological, and behavioral processes, were all unique to one another, having some overlap. An authenticity framework included embodied action and could be used to examine how an individual’s self may or may not be demonstrated behaviorally. Self-awareness was only effective in organizations if it was realized by authentic action (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005; Gardner et al. 2005).

In 2005, the team of Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa applied self-awareness to the authentic leader/follower theoretical framework and thus advanced the self-based perspective and a process model for its development. Self-awareness was now seen as important to developing the authentic follower. Gardner et al. (2005) posited that by fostering
trust and engagement in the follower, an organization could grow more authentic leaders. Sparrowe (2005) supported the work of Gardner et al. (2005) by building the relationship between the work of Gardner et al. (2005) and the framework of the narrative. Sparrowe (2005) claimed that the narrative captured constancy of the self as the self navigated the dynamic nature of live events. Sparrowe (2005) proposed that authenticity came from the narrative process and not from inner values and purpose. He introduced self-awareness for the first time as part of ethical leadership.

McMasters (1999) described authentic leaders as those who had a clear sense of purpose, lived by their values, led with their hearts, building lasting relationships, and showing self-discipline. Luthans and Avolio (2003) used positive psychology and transformational leadership theory to describe an authentic leader as someone who was confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, transparent, moral/ethical, future oriented, and as someone who gave priority to developing associates to be leaders. Avolio, Luthans, and Walumbwa (2004) similarly defined authentic leaders as people who were deeply aware of how they think and behave and were perceived by others as being aware of their own and others’ values/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operated; and who were confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character.

Although these definitions applied to characteristics of authentic leaders, similar extensions and applications of the concept of authenticity had shaped authentic leadership theory which had recently and rapidly emerged as a new, developing concept (Gardner, Cogliser, Davis, & Dickens, 2011). For instance, Avolio and Gardner (2005) identified positive psychological capital, positive moral perspective, leader self-awareness, leader self-regulation, leadership processes/behaviors, follower self-awareness/regulation, follower development, organizational
context, and genuine and sustained performance beyond expectations, as aspects of authentic leadership development. Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wemsing, and Peterson (2008) posited that the most prevalent authentic leadership framework used today involved four types of behaviors - those that developed/maintained or demonstrated a leader’s self-awareness, balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, and relational transparency. Authentic leadership scholars also pointed to Kernis (2003) and Kernis and Goldman (2006) for their authenticity theory as the foundation for their conception of authentic leadership.

The progression of literature and study provided above showed that the authenticity framework was formed from the combination of theories: self-awareness, self-knowledge, self-regulation, self-determination, and authentic behavior. The authenticity framework provided a structure of insight into the nature of how the self may be known and experienced, and the motivations underlying regulation of self and the variation of self that could be called authentic. Research from this study used an intake form created by Roberts (2014) that included questions from each of these theoretical concept areas to get a true measure of leadership authenticity through self-awareness.

**The Literature on the Narrative Paradigm**

As stated in chapter 1, a narrative described a series of events in a way of explanation differing from archives and chronicles that simply list events (Bozatzis & Dragonas, 2014; Sikes & Gale, 2006). The narrative allowed the researcher to study the lives of individuals by asking one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives. This information was often retold by the researcher in the form of a narrative chronology forming a combination of the views from the participant’s life with those of the researcher’s life (Creswell, 2009, p.13).
Narrative descriptions drew together diverse events and actions and provided links, connections, and coherence in a way that was fundamental to human understanding (Sikes & Gale, 2006). The narrative was the process through which people interpreted themselves and the world around them. The narrative approach allowed participants to share their experiences and for the researcher to further examine multiple experiences in an effort to shape a common true story through a collaborative effort of participants and researcher. Programs and interventions designed to increase self-awareness could be enhanced by the telling of one’s story (Díaz, 2013; Mahler, 2008). Its purpose was to better understand how individuals made sense of their environment.

The transition from story to narrative was the process of turning fragments into something that made sense known as a vignettes (Weick, 2012). Narrative vignettes could be used to capture the evolution of learning as individuals constructed their personal stories and then revised them to make sense of life experiences. The complex and chaotic nature of leadership made the use of the narrative appropriate. The narrative paradigm could be used as a tool for leaders to discover their inner selves and their own personal alignment to their work as they attempted to bring continuity and order to transitions that are often disorderly (Sparrowe, 2005). In this study, narrative inquiry provided a means to develop a deep understanding of leader participants by telling their stories. Additionally, thick description (Geertz, 1973) was used in storytelling and brought the participants story to life providing a detailed, unique look into their inner world. The steps of storytelling included:

1. watching how stories are being made,
2. collecting the stories,
3. provoking storytelling,
4. interpreting the stories,
5. analyzing the stories,
6. deconstructing the stories,
7. putting together your own story (Czarniawaka, 2004).

The narrative analysis perspective used stories told in the autobiographical words of the participant. This was appropriate for the research in this study because it focused the participant on creating a story based on the internal processing of their own self-awareness, the deep learning that resulted from reflection, and external consequences as well as internal development as a result of change (Connelly, & Clandinin, 1986; Creswell, 2008; Mahler, 2008). A good story held elements together that served as a guide.

A narrative project was one through which individuals interpretively wove a story, creating a vignette by uniting the disparate events, actions, and motivations of their life experiences (Sparrow, 2005; Weick, 1012). This study took advantage of the flexibility of the qualitative narrative by allowing the direction of the research questions to shift or change as the researcher’s investigation and the participant’s learning progressed and evolved (Creswell, 2013).

Narrative research could include literary works, diaries, written autobiographies, conversation, or life stories obtained from interviews (Mahler, 2008). Ultimately, the researcher could actively participate in the study by interacting with the leaders who participated, thereby becoming immersed in the study as they participated in the telling of the stories of their participants. As participants explored the complex topics of their situations, reflected, and learned through interviews, they created stories of their experiences that could be captured using a vignette format.

Narrative technique was a collaborative effort between the researcher and participants
that had its roots in humanities and social sciences. (Connelly, & Clandinin, 1986; Creswell, 2013). Narrative inquiry, considered a complex and developing method (Sikes & Gale, 2006), is defined as using stories as vehicles for rendering the self and the world intelligible (Bozatzis & Dragonas, 2014). Sparrowe (2005) built the relationship between authenticity and the methodology of the narrative. Sparrowe (2005) claimed that the narrative captured constancy of the self as the self navigated the dynamic nature life. Sparrowe (2005) proposed that authenticity came from the narrative process.

Narrative research was appropriate for a psychological perspective. It was often through the narrative that individuals came understand themselves (Mahler, 2008).

**Recommendations from the Literature on Being Self-aware and Achieving Authenticity**

Several authors made recommendations for improving self-awareness and authenticity skills and behavior. Suggestions for improvement included cultivating a better understanding on how we engage in self-deception, using a reflective process, building of a self-monitoring mechanism, ongoing interpersonal communication process, non-judgmental observation, bridging self-awareness with identity, coaching, and better feedback.

Understanding how we engaged in self-deception could help us to avoid it. In 2012, Ashley and Reiter-Palmon suggested that the ultimate goal of self-awareness was that individuals viewed themselves as both observers and subjects of observation. The team of authors studied the individual’s use of a reflective process used in the place of another person giving feedback. They recommended continued research, positing that accurate self-assessment and self-worth would have great relevance to leadership and leadership scholars. Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, (2001) suggested that somehow we needed to build into our lives a system for monitoring self-deception. We needed to create an ongoing process of intrapersonal communication.
to Goleman (1998), as one began to communicate with oneself, the external environmental structures began to dissolve and change into different patterns of relationship. There were few life experiences that encouraged this kind of self-awareness experience.

Examining the content of our thoughts helped us understand the mind that created them. We needed to recognize that thoughts were a product of our intrapersonal system, i.e. physiology, psychology, emotion, chemistry, history and not exclusively the brain. Self-observation and self-criticism was thought to be necessary to get to self-awareness (Goleman, 2003). Observation allowed us to view ourselves from outside ourselves and more objectively assess what is happening. It was non-judgmental observing that allowed us to rethink what we and others were doing with less emotional attachment to behaviors. This was referred to as interpersonal effectiveness. The less self-aware people were, the lower the intrapersonal and interpersonal effectiveness (Goleman, 1998).

Covey (2004) posited that it was in creating a bridging system that we could bring together the concept of identity, cognitive self-awareness, and self-deception. Urdang (2010) recommended emphasizing self-awareness in education and in the field using special educational videos and observational experiences. Urdang (2010) identified the psychodynamic world which emphasized the inner emotions and conflicts and recommended exploiting the power of awareness of past relationships and experiences. Axelrod, (2012) recommended the 360 degree review as a way for leaders and followers to obtain feedback and Roeser and Peck (2009) wrote about contemplative education. They described it as “a set of pedagogical practices designed to cultivate the potentials of mindful awareness in which the values of personal growth, learning, moral living, and caring for others are nurtured” (p.1).

Executive coaching was described by Kombarakaran et al. (2008) as an interactive process between senior executive and coach that improved leadership effectiveness by improving cognitive self-awareness so that new behaviors could emerge. Kombarakaran et al. (2008) posited that executive coaching could assist a leader with transitional challenges through the examination of personal management style, especially critical if the leader had problematic attitudes and behaviors.

Coaching could afford the leader a chance to reflect and examine behaviors that could be barriers to performance and allow the leader to expand their personal options for exploring and developing new problem solving options (Kombarakaran et al., 2008; Gregory, Beck, & Carr, 2011). Kombarakaran et al. (2008) reminded us that leadership productivity was a top priority in business and pointed to studies on effective people management positing that coaching could have an impact on cognitive self-awareness which could lead to an increase in leadership effectiveness.

Some writers argued whether executive coaching belonged in the field of psychology or sociology (Urdang, 2010; Axelrod, 2012). McMaster (1999) more than any other writer, gave validation to the connection between self-awareness and the field of sociology by connecting the skill to a large array of different aspects of human activity such as learning, feedback, communication, and leadership.
Morin (2006) recommended that leaders engaged in self-observation techniques. Activities where one could review audio or visual recordings were best and have been proven to provide valuable feedback and reinforcement of self-awareness skills.

The literature covered the importance of self-awareness skills. Intellectually it made sense to make self-awareness and authenticity a priority to relate to and understand ourselves and yet these skills were not perceived as urgent in business or education.

**What we do not realize**

It was important to recognize the paradoxical nature of the topic of self and the challenge involved in researching the topic. We did not realize that becoming self-aware was challenging (Kegan, 1994). Because self-awareness was not widely practiced methodology, because it was not a priority, or a focus of scholars, it got lost (McMasters, 1999). The result was a circular process that emphasized the status quo rather than developing new paradigms (Kegan, 1994). McMasters (1999) posited that we did not realize what we were not aware of and yet we recognized how dangerous ignorance of self can be. Kegan (1994, p.281) offered advice:

> And what of those, it might be asked, who are not ready yet to take even the first step onto the bridge? The goal here might be only that the person be able to stand poised before the bridge rather than run from it.

McMasters (1999) told us that there was an abundance of research that validated the need to improve our self-awareness skills and yet we were still seeking rudimentary tools to increase our awareness of self-awareness. To develop our self-awareness, we needed to recognize our own self-talk and monitor it so that we could analyze messages coming from this hidden area. This was often difficult to do. We had ignored our intrapersonal system for so long that all we
were aware of was our emotions that had been held in disregard for a long time (McMasters, 1999).

Summary

This chapter explored the literature on self-awareness and authenticity in leaders. Many authors agreed that the result of increased self-awareness was often a decrease of deceptive practices that could impede learning, block critical feedback, and obstruct decision making (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992; Caldwell, 2009; Kunda, 1990; Leary & Tangney, 2003; McMasters, 1999; Moshavl, Brown, & Dodd, 2003; Newman, 1999; Steiner, 2014). There was agreement that self-awareness should be encouraged. It was seen as an effective tool for managing the complexity and chaos that are part of today’s dynamic environment (Ashley & Reiter-Palmon, 2012; Snowden, 2002; Steiner, 2014).

Based on this literature review and synthesis of the material in this section, three major conclusions could be drawn that support this research. The first conclusion was that many scholars used multidimensional concepts to create their arguments as they relate to leadership learning and development. This was also the case for scholars who researched authenticity and self-awareness. The second conclusion was that little has been written in the narrative using examples of self-aware and authentic behaviors that are seen as critical. The third conclusion was that self-awareness, critical to authentic leadership, deep learning, and transformative thinking, was a challenging skill to develop and requires further research for a deeper understanding.

The literature on leadership pointed to self-awareness and authenticity as being the most important skills required for leadership success (Ashley & Reiter, 2012; Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2001; Roberts, 2014; Snowden, 2002). Very little of the work that was done captured
the voice of the leader demonstrating their self-awareness, authentic behavior and its impact on their external environment (McMasters, 1999; Roberts, 2014).

This study contributed to the literature by providing narrative examples of leadership behavior, documenting dialog and behavior from leaders in action, and demonstrating self-awareness processing, and authentic as well as deceptive behavior.
3. Research Design

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore aspects of self-awareness and authentic behavior in leaders. The leaders selected for this study were experienced individuals on whom organizations, employees, clients, and customers solely depended to make the life-critical decisions necessary to meet stated and implied needs, to be successful, and sustain existence. The first section of this chapter presented the research questions and the rationale for the qualitative research methodology. This chapter also covered the phases of data collection, the participant interviews, the steps involved with the transcription process, data analysis, and coding. In addition, trustworthiness and ethical considerations were covered. The intake form, semi-structured interview protocol, and sampling procedures used were also discussed.

To examine self-awareness and authenticity in leaders, the researcher chose a qualitative research methodology and, a narrative paradigm to create the authenticity framework. By using the authenticity framework, this study was able to trace self-awareness to authentic action and back to the internal self-awareness processing of information usually gathered from feedback. Qualitative methodology, narrative paradigm, authenticity theory, and semi-structured interviews were used to allow participants to share their experiences and create narratives through their stories.

Research Questions

The research questions reflected the innermost thoughts of experienced leaders as examples of self-awareness and authentic behavior. Each of the research questions explored self-awareness in leaders. The research questions were:
1. How did experienced leaders use self-awareness to make sense of their actions and practices in complex and chaotic environments?

2. How could authenticity theory be used to conceptualize authenticity, particularly in regard to identifying and understanding critical interpersonal processes such as self-awareness and feedback?

The first question identified the leadership group that was used to conduct this study. Leaders were selected because feedback skills and self-awareness skills were considered critical to their success by prominent authors in the literature (Ashley & Reiter, 2012; Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2001; Roberts, 2014; Snowden, 2002), and because leaders tended to operate under a high degree of stress. Stressful situations, often over time, can have negative impact on the self-awareness process (Caldwell, 2009). By documenting a leader’s thinking and action from inception to execution, the researcher has been able to capture levels of self-awareness and deceptive behavior as the processing and behavior was taking place (Morin, 2006).

The second question addressed the foundation needed to be able to achieve a high level of self-awareness and alignment which showed up in the form of authentic behavior. Uncovering the factors that encouraged or discouraged this behavior was important to successful leadership, continued leadership learning, and leader development. Identifying the underlying aspects that played an important role in leadership was a major contribution to the literature (Roberts, 2014; Steiner, 2014). Authenticity theory was the framework for this study that set the scope for the information being collected. The use of authenticity theory as a framework was important because it included all the essential elements for studying leadership self-awareness in action (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005; Gardner et al. 2005). Not only did
it include psychological and physiological elements, but behavioral elements as well (Roberts, 2014). This combination of constructs allowed for the study of self-awareness and the results of being self-aware.

**The Qualitative Design**

A qualitative research approach was used in this study fit the study of self-awareness and authenticity. Qualitative inquiry, founded in sociology and anthropology was an effective method for emphasizing a participant’s experience or perception (Creswell, 2008). Qualitative research often used words to collect data. The qualitative method was comprised of a set of interpretive practices that made the world visible starting with broad questions and using an analytical approach that looks for themes that came from responses (Butin, 2009; Creswell, 2008). The semi-structured interview was a typical interpretive technique used in qualitative research that offered insight into the complexity of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2008) and at the same time, flexibility to allow the participant to be creative in their response.

In this study, qualitative inquiry was focused on individuals in leadership roles and on gaining a deeper understanding of the self-awareness process. This inquiry was reflected in the experience of each participant through their own words.

Creswell (2008) stated that because of the complexity of issues that are researched using qualitative analysis, the participant sample size used is usually small. Because of the detailed nature of qualitative research and the need to report details on the participant and the research site, a larger number of participants could be unmanageable and result in superficial perspectives (Butin, 2009; Creswell, 2008).

The qualitative method used interpretive practices that allowed the researcher to be deeply involved as an active participant while describing and interpreting the experiences of
others in close observations as was the case in this study (Butin, 2009; Creswell, 2008; Mahler, 2008). This practice was in contrast with observing from a distance, often a practice that was used in quantitative research (Butin, 2009). This qualitative research was an exploratory journey aimed at closely observing leaders’ behavior as their authentic selves were explored in semi-structured one-on-one interviews.

Interpretive studies allowed for the subjective experience and multiple realities of individuals to become data. Common among different interpretive studies was the notion of meaning-making and reflection as a result of experience and experience as a result of meaning-making and reflection. Because this study focused on the experiences of leaders and how they thought and acted, a qualitative method that valued self-awareness and represented participants through their own voices was appropriate. It was often through the narrative that individuals came understand themselves (Butin, 2009; Creswell, 2008; Mahler, 2008).

**Strategy of Inquiry through Narrative Research**

The method chosen for this study was a form of narrative analysis, or the use of personal life histories as the basis of the research. The use of life histories as a data gathering tool evolved from oral traditions and ethnographical approaches long used in sociological and anthropological research. Narratives have a long history in autobiography, biography life history research and psychobiography (Mahler, 2008).

A critical review of the literature revealed that there is a shortage of qualitative research on authenticity and self-awareness. Therefore, studies that uncovered the stories of authentic leaders needed to emerge. The research conducted for this study attempted to narrow that gap by providing stories from leaders, using their own words to describe their challenges and how they viewed themselves and their accomplishments.
The narrative was defined as the use of stories as vehicles for rendering the self and the world intelligible (Bozatzis & Dragonas, 2014). For this reason, narrative inquiry was selected for this study. The narrative captured constancy of the self as the self navigated the dynamic nature of live events (Sparrow, 2005). Narrative inquiry served to draw together diverse events and actions that provided links, connections, and coherence among them. The process of finding meaningful patterns among a multiplicity of sources was considered fundamental to human understanding (Sikes & Gale, 2006).

Narrative research was concerned with stories that we could enquire into: narratives as data. Contrary to archives and chronicles that simply list events, the narrative described a series of events in a way of explanation (Bozatzis & Dragonas, 2014; Sikes & Gale, 2006).

Narrative research was a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher studied the lives of individuals and asked one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives. This information was often retold or restored by the researcher into a narrative chronology.

In the end, the narrative combined views from the participant’s life with those of the researcher’s life into a collaborative narrative. (Creswell, 2009, p.13).

Narrative inquiry provided a means to develop a deep understanding for the sense-making of participants (Díaz, 2013; Mahler, 2008). The narrative was the process through which people interpreted themselves and the world around them. Narrative programs and interventions designed to increase self-awareness could be enhanced by telling one’s story. Narratives could be used to capture learning evolution as individuals constructed their personal stories and then revised them to make sense of life experiences. The chaotic nature of leadership made the narrative appropriate as leaders attempted to bring continuity and order to transitions that were
often disorderly. Narrative inquiry in this study provided a means to develop a deep understanding for the sense-making of leader participants by telling their stories (Weick, 2012).

The narrative was fundamental to human understanding. The narrative approach allowed participants to share their experiences and for the researcher to further examine multiple experiences in an effort to shape a single overarching story through a collaborative effort of participants and researcher (Weick, 2012).

Narrative technique, a collaborative effort between the researcher and participants, that had its roots in humanities and social sciences, (Connelly, & Clandinin, 1986; Creswell, 2013) allowed for joint collaboration and discussion between leader and researcher. Thick description (Geertz, 1973) that could be created in story telling was added by the researcher to the narratives in this study to provide an intimate look into the inner world of the participants.

Qualitative narrative inquiries, by their very nature, were flexible. This study took advantage of that flexibility allowing the direction of the research questions to shift or change as the researcher’s investigation progressed (Creswell, 2013). Burrell and Morgan’s (1979) interpretive-subjective paradigm related the research question and methodology as means to “delve into depths of human consciousness and subjectivity in their quest for the fundamental meanings which underlie social life” (p. 31). Ultimately, the researcher actively participated in the study by interacting with the experienced leaders who participated, thereby becoming immersed in the study and in the stories of the participants.

Based on qualitative methods, narrative inquiry, the use of one-on-one semi-structured interviews, and analysis, data was gathered in the dialogue about self-awareness through the voices of participants in the field. As participants explored the complex topics of their situations,
reflected, and learned through interviews, they created stories of their experiences that could be captured.

**Design Overview**

In this study, the researcher selected eight experienced leaders who were successful in public or private enterprise. The sampling size was appropriate for the narrative approach. Narrative research was best for capturing the detailed stories of a small number of individuals (Butin, 2009; Creswell, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The narrative approach influenced the type of questions that were asked, the form of data collection, and the steps in data analysis and the researcher’s intent to get a deeper understanding of the stories of the participants (Butin, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The interview questions selected encouraged the telling of the story of the leader. By allowing the telling of the story, by hearing and watching the participant talk about their values and their life’s work, a more complete picture was created. Table 3 below provides the relationship between the five questions that were asked in the semi-structured interviews, a list of eight authenticity questions from The Harvard Business Review (George, Sims, McLean, & Mayer, 2007) and the corresponding supporting literature provided in chapter two.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Question</th>
<th>HBR Authenticity Question</th>
<th>Supporting Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tell me about a time when you faced an uncertain situation and needed to</td>
<td>1. Which people and experiences in your early life had the greatest impact on you?</td>
<td>Links to self-knowledge authenticity construct (Roberts, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make a quick decision and it worked out well.</td>
<td>2. What tools do you use to become self-aware? What is your authentic self? What are</td>
<td>Links question to authenticity theory. REAL authentic behavior (Roberts, 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the moments when you say to yourself, this is the real me?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tell me about a time when you had made a decision, but mid-course you</td>
<td>3. What are your most deeply held values? Where did they come from? Have your values</td>
<td>Authentic leaders should regularly reflect on the alignment of their values and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>realized that another path needed to be taken.</td>
<td>changed significantly since your childhood? How do your values inform your actions?</td>
<td>actions (McMasters, 1999) Link to self-knowledge in REAL instrument (Roberts, 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motivation in your life?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Tell me about a time when your organization was heading in a direction that</td>
<td>5. What kind of support team do you have? How can your support team make you a more</td>
<td>Self-awareness connected to feedback (Ashcroft 1989; Atwater and Yammarino, 1992;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you knew needed changing but there was no support with the board, your peers,</td>
<td>authentic leader? How should you diversify your team to broaden your perspective?</td>
<td>Steiner, 2014; Sosik, 2001). Connection to emotional intelligence Goleman, Boyatzis,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or your subordinates.</td>
<td></td>
<td>&amp; McKee (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Tell me about a time when one of your choices did not work out well and you</td>
<td>6. Is your life integrated? Are you able to be the same person in all aspects of your</td>
<td>Tie to REAL Self-regulation question. (Roberts, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>need to admit it to your organization.</td>
<td>life—personal, work, family, and community? If not, what is holding you back?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Is there a time when you were out of alignment with your thoughts, morals, and</td>
<td>7. Do you think that authenticity is important to your success? What does being</td>
<td>Authenticity is the most important skill a leader can have (Kolb, 1984; Ashcroft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beliefs?</td>
<td>authentic mean in your life? Are you more effective as a leader when you behave</td>
<td>1989; Aron, 2000; Atwater and Yammarino, 1992; Gregory, Beck, &amp; Carr, 2011; Joseph,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>authentically? Have you ever paid a price for your authenticity as a leader? Was it</td>
<td>2006; Kombarakaran, Baker, Yang, &amp; Fernandes. 2008; McMasters, 1999; Nesbit 2012;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>worth it? What barriers do you face to being authentic? Can you give an example?</td>
<td>Sosik, 2001; Steiner, 2014; Tsui &amp; Ashford, 1994; Watkin, 2000; Wegner 1980; Dickson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1979).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. What steps can you take today, tomorrow, and over the next year to develop your</td>
<td>Successful leadership (Axelrod, 2012; Goleman, Boyatzis, &amp; McKee, 2001; Sparrowe,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>authentic leadership?</td>
<td>2005; Sosik &amp; Megerian, 1999; Tsui &amp; Ashford, 1994; Watling et al., 2002)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The interview questions sought expression that reflected the innermost thoughts of experienced leaders as examples of self-awareness and authentic behavior. By using the narrative context, the research could focus on knowledge development that came from internal processing of information, self-awareness, and reflection, which often can and did lead to authentic outcomes.

**Sample design**

The study started out with a list of over 50 leaders. From that list, 23 leaders responded to a request for participation. Thirteen leaders completed the intake form. Eight of the thirteen were selected for the interview process.

Participants were selected based on completion of an intake form indications of leadership experience, and various strengths and weaknesses in the areas of authenticity and self-awareness. Six of the eight participants selected were interviewed in an environment of their choosing that provided a quiet, confidential, safe space, free from distraction and interruption and most important, a place where they felt comfortable (Creswell, 2007). Two participants were interviewed by phone. Table 4 that follows, provided a summary of the demographics of the participants who completed the intake form. Participants that were chosen for the one-on-one semi structured interviews were identified in column two.
Table 4. 
Summary of Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>One-on-One Interview</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of Leadership Experience</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Self-Awareness Score</th>
<th>Authenticity Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Max</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>15?</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>IT</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Ted</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>Consulting</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Kyle</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Don</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Intake only</td>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>Gov’t</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Intake only</td>
<td>Jeff</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Consulting</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Intake only</td>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Intake only</td>
<td>Cal</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>25+</td>
<td>IT</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Intake only</td>
<td>Mel</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Procedures

Before beginning the data collection process, the researcher reviewed and completed the Northeastern University review and approval activities involving research on human subjects. The Institution Review Board (IRB) required that all doctoral candidates complete a training program titled “Protecting Human Research Participants”. Research commenced upon proof of completion of this training included in the IRB review and approval of the research proposal,
consent forms, research questions, and research procedures for this project. Once approval was received from the IRB, the researcher followed the interview and intake process presented by Creswell (2008) by first sending out preliminary email to all potential participants and then reconnecting and reconfirming their commitment to participate in the research. This was followed by mailing consent forms to all participants. Once consent forms were signed and returned, the intake form was piloted with one participant. After changes were made from pilot feedback, each participant was then sent a copy of the final intake form (Appendix A). This form consisted of 43 questions using a Likert scale for responses. The items in the form were created by Roberts (2014). Roberts (2014) wrote, refined, examined, and revised these questions with assistance of six subject matter experts in study and instrument design who had leadership experience and familiarity with the literature on authenticity. Item construction came after a comprehensive review of authenticity literature and specific theories mentioned throughout this document. The combination of these constructs, used to develop the authenticity framework, was also used by Roberts (2014) to create a written instrument.

**The Roberts (2014) Intake Instrument**

An intrapersonal study on a construct like self-awareness, a multidimensional concept (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2011), required an approach that included the fields of psychology, physiology, leadership, sociology, and philosophy (Roberts, 2014). One way this researcher covered each construct was by representing the authenticity framework with a version of the verified and validated Role-specific Evaluation of Authenticity in Leaders (REAL) to measure this set of behavioral constructs in the study participants (Appendix A). By considering psychological, physiological, and behavioral components and theories contributing to authenticity using REAL, the complications of using the multidimensional authenticity
framework that connected leadership authenticity to leadership self-awareness, feedback, and self-deception had been partially circumvented.

Through the REAL instrument, the complex nature of studying self-awareness in leaders and the way in which leaders developed accurate and meaningful knowledge about themselves could be simplified. REAL was created from a comprehensive set of the authenticity literature, and specific theories (i.e., person-centered psychology, self-based theories, and self-determination theory). The researcher (Roberts, 2014) wrote 43 items to cover the content domain according to the four dimensions below (Table 5) with a focus on the level of authenticity a leader perceives and demonstrates within their leadership role. Six subject matter experts in research and instrument design, who had leadership experience and familiarity with the literature on authenticity, assisted in reviewing, rewriting, refining the instrument questions (Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). Item construction came after a comprehensive review of authenticity literature and specific theories mentioned throughout this document. The combination of these constructs, used to develop the authenticity framework was also used to create a textual instrument. The pilot instrument for REAL was conducted with 26 participants. Variables were inspired by existing literature on authenticity and authentic leadership. Eight authenticity-related regression models were analyzed and all models controlled for respondent demographics. The instrument was examined theoretically against related authenticity predictors and outcomes of the following proven scales and measures:

- The Authenticity Scale (AS) measure for general authenticity
- The Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (KIMS)
- Regulation of negative emotions through Self-regulation of Withholding Negative Emotions Questionnaire (SRWNE)
• Global Self-Esteem Measure
• Social Desirability Scale that measures impressions and self-deception.
• Ryff’s Psychological Well-Being Measure
• Integrity Scale by Schlenker, Weigold, and Schlenker (2008)
• Self-Importance of Moral Identity Scale by Aquino and Reed (Roberts, 2014)

Reduction, validity, testing, and abstraction were all considered within the authenticity framework constructed (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000; Murphy & Davidshofer, 1991). The result, shown in Table 5, was the creation of eight components and 43 items that sufficiently represented all dimensions of the proposed theoretical framework (Roberts, 2014).

Table 5. 
**Authenticity Construct Components and Item Content**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Item Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Knowledge</td>
<td>Knowledge of:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Self in General</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Physiology/Body</td>
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<td>• Emotions/Feelings</td>
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<td>• Cognitions/Thoughts</td>
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<td>Self-Regulation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• External</td>
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<td>Authentic Behavior</td>
<td>Behavioral Congruence with:</td>
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<td>• Self in General</td>
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<td>• Personal Goals</td>
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<td>• Emotions/Opinions</td>
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(Roberts, 2014)
At least four rounds of feedback resulted in item content as well as design of the instrument. Subject matter experts provided input regarding the appropriateness of the response scales selected for each of the four constructs. A blind sort of 22 volunteers was used to interpret and refine problematic item language (Guion, 1977). Two pilot instrument tests were conducted. Items that were not clear were rewritten. Study participants were invited through a database housed by a California-based international consulting firm that offered training and leadership services to organizations across industries. Their database included approximately 90,000 email addresses of previous and prospective clients of the company (Roberts, 2014).

By using the multidimensional authenticity theory and a version of the instrument created, tested, and validated by Roberts (2014) to measure authenticity, REAL, the data analysis of this study assessed the capabilities of participants in three ways:

1) Determining what the selection of interview participants will be, determining strengths and weaknesses in advance of the one-on-one interviews,

2) Determining the questions asked in the interview conversations, and

3) Providing a measure of consistency and accountability between interview findings, the intake written results, and all four components of authenticity theory.

Analysis of the intake forms received gave specific information in four areas relevant to authenticity: 1) self-knowledge which was considered knowledge of the self in general including personal qualities, personal values/beliefs, and personal goals, 2) self-awareness that considered awareness of physiology/body, emotions/feelings, cognitions/thoughts, 3) self-regulation, a specific type of self-awareness, which looked at four types of regulation: external, introjected, identified, integrated, and 4) authentic behavior which was behavior that was congruent with the self in general, personal qualities, personal values/beliefs, personal goals, emotions/opinions.
Limitations to Robert’s (2014) Authenticity Theory

Robert’s authenticity theory and resulting tool may take some of the complexity out of the existing multidimensional framework that is the platform for authenticity theory. It does not however take the place of field observation and live data collection. Roberts is successful in covering and measuring the different components of the theory in written form. He falls short in creating a clear description of what these behaviors look like in action in a live environment.

The Intake Process

There were three steps to the participant intake process:

1. An initial invitation was sent to 50 leader candidates. Twenty-three responded back with their interest and consent by email or by phone. Some returned a written consent form.

2. Each of the 23 candidates were sent a written review form. Thirteen responded back with a completed form.

3. An informal interview was conducted to validate the 13 responses. From these brief interviews, eight candidates were selected for the final interview process.

Intake forms were returned by email to the researcher for analysis. There was no preconceived view of how the intake results would result in participant selection. This allowed the researcher to view the intake data with an open mind allowing the data to control the direction of the research.

Following the receipt of the intake forms, the answers were analyzed for consistency. The researcher inquired about the intake data with each participant by conducting a 10-12 minute interview to discuss the answers. Each of these sessions was transcribed and coded. Some of the
material from these brief interviews was included in the participant vignettes (Butin, 2009; Creswell, 2008).

Once the intake results were analyzed, and the intake interviews had been coded and analyzed, the researcher was able to determine which participants would be used for the final interview process. The final determination was that a variety of data would be most informative. Therefore, the researcher selected eight participants who seemed to be at different levels of self-awareness and authenticity for the final interview.

Eight participants were notified by email and by phone that they had been selected for further research. A formal request for permission to gather further research was included (Appendix D). Each participant signed and returned the formal letter of consent form indicating their willingness to continue their participation in the study.

**Data collection**

The leaders’ stories were gathered through personal conversations in open ended in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2013). Six of the eight interviews were conducted face-to-face. Two were facilitated by phone. The interviews served as the main form of data collection. One-on-one interviewing was the major means of gathering experiential narrative materials for developing a richer and deeper understanding about leader experiences (Creswell, 2013; Mahler, 2008).

**One-on-one semi-structured interviews**

Each interview was recorded, hand-transcribed, and stored securely in electronic formats. Participants provided permission for the audio taping on an informed consent form. Designing an effective interview mitigated many concerns that could arise during the interview process such as difficulty with scheduling, interruptions during interviews, problems with transcription technology, keeping participants focused and addressing emotional outbursts or reluctance to
speak. The important steps for conducting interview research included identifying a purposeful sample, determining an appropriate location for conducting the interview, developing the right interview questions to support research themes to discuss during the interview, designing interview protocol, and obtaining consent from participants (Creswell, 2007).

The data was collected in 5 phases:

- Phase 1: an initial conversation with the participants to review intake data, establish rapport, gather initial background information, and to schedule their in-depth interview.

- Phase 2: a 45-60 minute interview using semi-structured questions based on the results of the intake data. The audio-tapes of interviews were transcribed by the researcher and coded. A copy of the transcript was sent to a peer coder to create triangulation of the data. A descriptive vignette on each participant was developed from the coded transcriptions, and review of the audio-tapes.

- Phase 3: Participants were invited to reflect on their profile and provide any follow-up comments and the first round of coding of the transcriptions.

- Phase 4: a cross-case analysis was conducted (Miles, Huberman, Saladan, 2014) in which collapsing of codes into emergent themes was developed.

- Phase 5: overlay of the theoretical framework to seek matching evidence between authenticity theory and participant data.

Data Analysis

Interview questions were formed from analysis of the REAL intake instrument (Roberts, 2014) data where participant answers prompted a more thorough understanding of the area of interest that would lead to maximum utilization of data. The researcher focused on areas that showed strength in self-awareness and areas where self-awareness could be at risk and developed
tentative categories for coding after interviewing participants. These coded results were reviewed and revised to eliminate redundancy. Relevant concepts were highlighted. Once categories were defined and reliable, verbatim quotes from the interview process were selected to illustrate the theme of each category. These themes provide the basis for findings in chapters four and five. Table 6 shows examples of codes for the major themes of interest in this study.

**Table 6.**

*Codes Used for Research Analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes/Themes</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Sample <em>In Vivo</em> Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Subconscious. Perceptions experienced with no awareness of mental events</td>
<td>“I don’t know what I’m saying.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA1</td>
<td>Actions taken or observations made with little or no self-awareness</td>
<td>“I was moving fast and I made a bad decision.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA2</td>
<td>Dialog indicating awareness of presence on environment</td>
<td>“I’m taking up a lot of time on this one problem.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA3</td>
<td>Indications of self-examination in relation to environment</td>
<td>“My interest in this problem seems obsessive.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA4</td>
<td>Awareness of the act of being aware and the observations about self, boundaries, constraints, in being with one’s own self.</td>
<td>“It is important for me to check in with myself. It helps me keep my emotions in check.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Examples of possible self-deception</td>
<td>“I know that this is inconsistent but I need to do it anyway.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Manifestations of self-awareness in behavior</td>
<td>“I made sure that my own desire for success did not interfere.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Manifestations of deception in behavior</td>
<td>“I know that what I am doing is wrong.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Examples of how feedback is processed</td>
<td>“Someone told me…” “I told someone…”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **(S) Subconscious behavior**: Experience of perceptions, sensations, and thoughts without being aware that mental events were taking place. An unreflective actor (Morin, 2006).
- (SA1) Self-awareness level 1: Actions taken or observations made with little or no self-awareness. One experienced mental events such as having pain, tasting, or seeing.

- (SA2) Self-awareness level 2: Dialog indicating awareness of presence on environment also known as public self-awareness. This involved visible attributes such as behavior and physical appearance.

- (SA3) Self-awareness level 3: Indications of self-examination in relation to environment also known as private self-awareness. This consisted of characteristics such as emotions, sensations, perceptions, values, goals, and motives.

- (SA4) Self-awareness level 4: Awareness of the act of being aware and the observations about self, boundaries, constraints, in being with one’s own self. Also known as meta-self-awareness or being aware that one is aware. An individual having access to their own opinions, values, goals, and self-memories could be said to have a higher level of self-awareness.

- (SD) Self-deception: Ignorance of or lack of acknowledgement of the core of one’s being.

- (A) Authenticity: Manifestations of self-awareness in behavior.

- (D) Deception: Manifestations of deception in behavior.

- (F) Feedback: Examples of how feedback is processed.

Table 6 was developed to show the major themes with codes and examples of dialog that might indicate presence of a certain theme. Interviews were transcribed and coded to capture significant leader insights into their behavior using the vignette outline from Miles and
Huberman (1984) and the coding analysis outline by Bogdan and Biklen (1992). Data analysis included the following coding methods:

- **Common theme:** The analysis of this research focused on common themes among all participants.

- **Vignette:** A vignette was a focused series of events taken to be representative of a conversation. It had a story-like or narrative feel. It was a portrayal of conduct in everyday life. It was a reduced account, clearer than real life. It alone cannot represent the original event. Vignette was effective when data collection was not straightforward because data were spread out over time and space (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013). The creation of the vignette followed an outline: The context, hopes, who was involved, what was done, what happened as a result, what was the impact, why it happened and other comments such as future expectations, what was learned, predictions, etc. (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013). Vignettes could be concrete, focused, vivid, compelling and persuasive stories. Using more than one vignette could help to prove that a situation was typical.

- **Descriptive coding:** The research analysis method used a descriptive coding strategy to assist with the creation of themes. Descriptive coding identified topics through the use of brief sentences or words (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013).

- **In vivo coding:** In vivo coding was employed to record the actual language found in the qualitative data transcript. During in vivo coding, the transcript was read several times and searched for the participant’s words and/or sentences that could give an understanding of their perceptions.
Axial coding: The Axial coding method was applied by grouping similarly coded data followed by relabeling that data into conceptual categories (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013). Axial coding allows themes and sub-themes to emerge. The main topics of the questions asked during the interview were be used to organize these themes into categories.

Nine categories of common subthemes were also identified and tracked:

- organizational issues,
- blame,
- authority issues,
- staff issues,
- honesty,
- trauma,
- automatic behavior,
- quitting, and
- split personality.

**Ethical Considerations**

Participants and their institutions remained anonymous in order encourage openness and candor during the interview process (Creswell, 2007; Creswell, 2008). Appropriate disclosure and consent forms were provided. Any participant could have decided at any time, not to contribute to the study. The researcher asked all participants to sign a letter of consent that explained that participation was voluntary. Participants were informed that they have the right to decline to answer any question and may withdraw from the interview at any time for any reason.
Transcripts and resulting vignettes were shared with participants and edited for accuracy. There was full disclosure of the research and research materials. The researcher insured that all information is confidential and anonymous before, during, and after study is completed. The researcher has and will continue to protect participants by using pseudonyms in the transcribed interviews, data analysis, and in the final product (Butin, 2009; Creswell, 2007).

**Data verification and trustworthiness of study**

Four criteria of trustworthiness were established for qualitative research:

1. Credibility: the research produces plausible findings and interpretations,
2. Transferability: readers are provided with enough information to determine the appropriateness of transferring findings to another context,
3. Dependability: the process of research used is well developed and documented, and
4. Confirmability: the data are appropriately linked to findings and interpretations) (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Maintaining trustworthiness and validity in this study was a priority for the researcher. Participants were apprised of the motivation of the researcher and the purpose of the study in order to build rapport (Creswell, 2007; Creswell, 2008).

The researcher used a four step inter-reader reliability procedure to insure trustworthiness of the coding process:

1. A second researcher was sent un-coded transcripts and a coding table.
2. The second researcher read and coded the transcription.
3. The coded transcript was sent back to the primary researcher who reviewed and contrasted the results.
4. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved between the two researchers.
To insure accuracy and objective reporting that was free from bias, the data from this study was made available to be reviewed by participants. As much as possible, findings, transcript analysis, and vignettes were a co-creation between participant and researcher. Each participant was offered the opportunity to review and provide input into their part of the research. Findings were edited to include their feedback to insure that the events covered are presented accurately (Creswell, 2009). Coding was reviewed and validated by a third-party researcher (Butin 2009; Creswell, 2009).

**Potential Research Bias**

Machi and McEvoy (2009) stated that by acknowledging bias, it made it more likely that subjectivity could be controlled in research. This was validated by Creswell (2009). Therefore, this researcher wished to disclose any bias that could interfere with the accuracy of this study.

This study was conducted by a leadership consultant to chief (C-level) executives around the world. The researcher had over two decades of leadership experience involving leadership problems and lead behavior issues. Organizations that influenced this study include economic development firms, government agencies, and businesses large and small from around the world. The researcher also taught business and leadership at four universities in the United States. Her experience with students was a major motivator for this topic of study.

The researcher had strong feelings about self-deception and believed in the possibility that part of the normal human condition included some degree of self-deception and other forms of deception external to the self. The researcher viewed social constructivism as a contributor to possible deceptive behavior. The researcher believed that it is possible to remove some of the barriers to self-awareness and that most people who have blocks to learning can be partially or completely transformed.
The researcher considered feedback to be valuable. Removing resistance and negativity towards feedback of all kinds has been a goal of this researcher who believed that feedback skills are critical. She devoted a great deal of time to developing these in herself, in her students, and her clients.

**Summary**

As participants explored the complex topics of their situations, reflected, and learned through interviews, they created stories about self-awareness and authenticity in their experiences that could be captured by the researcher using qualitative methods, narrative inquiry, one-on-one semi-structured interviews, and structured coding and analysis.

An interpretive qualitative analysis was employed in this study. Upon transcribing the interviews, preparing, and examining the data collected, and coding it, the researcher proceeded with an analysis and refinement of themes and categories through applied descriptive and *in vivo*, as well as axial coding methods. Once the transcripts were translated and coded, analysis of the transcripts was directed to look for themes or categories for the axial coding.

Demographic data collected on all participants is included in Table 4.

The analysis of this research used transcribed interviews to code for examples of self-awareness and deception, as well as by pivotal moments of authenticity. Key events across time and space were condensed into a vignette that represented the story of participants in this research.

A detailed analysis of the findings of this study was included in Chapter 4 and interpreted in Chapter 5.
4. Data Collection and Analysis

Overview

Nine major themes and nine subthemes were used to analyze the data for this study. These included subconscious behavior, four levels of self-awareness, and two levels of deception, authenticity, and feedback.

Nine subthemes emerged from the data as key aspects of leadership self-awareness and authenticity. The themes were not equal in terms of their occurrence. Only three of the subthemes were found in all the participants. According to the participants, these subthemes described experiences that are routine in their daily lives. Although the themes were represented in the data in different ways, collectively they represented the characteristics, from the perspective of participants, of the key elements of a leader’s sense making or meaning making experiences.

Authentic behavior was rare. There were two participants who were more authentic than the other six. There were many examples of meta-self-awareness, the highest form of self-awareness (Morin, 2006) in all but one participant. Deception was apparent in all but two participants. Feedback was absent from all but one participant.

Common Themes

The thematic analysis of this study was based on nine areas related to self-awareness and authenticity.

1. The first theme was subconscious behavior. This area covered experience of perceptions, sensations, and thoughts without being aware that mental events were taking place. This type of thinking was not self-aware.

2. The second theme was the first and lowest level of self-awareness. This theme captured actions taken or observations made with little or no self-awareness. At this
level, one might have experienced perceptual events such as having pain, tasting, or seeing.

3. The third theme was the second level of self-awareness that included dialog indicating awareness of presence on environment also known as public self-awareness (Morin, 2006). This level involved visible attributes such as behavior and physical appearance.

4. The third level of self-awareness included indications of self-examination in relation to environment also known as private self-awareness (Morin, 2006) and consisted of self-examination of characteristics such as emotions, sensations, perceptions, values, goals, and motives.

5. The fifth theme was the fourth level of self-awareness that could be described as awareness of the act of being aware and the observations about self, boundaries, constraints, in being with one’s own self. This was also known as meta-self-awareness or being aware that one is aware (Morin, 2006). An individual who had access to their own opinions, values, goals, and self-memories could be said to have a higher level of self-awareness.

6. The sixth theme included examples of possible self-deception. Self-deception was the ignorance of or lack of acknowledgement of the core of one’s being.

7. Theme number seven was the authenticity theme which captured manifestations of self-awareness in behavior.

8. Manifestations of deception in behavior were collected in the deception category, the eighth theme.

9. The ninth and last theme captured examples of feedback and how it was processed.
Due to the tremendous amount of data collected in this study, some of the participant’s dialog had to be excluded from the results. The best examples of the themes and subthemes were shared. The researcher selected the most relevant content from the participant transcripts and participant intake data.

The data selection used fit the narrative process and vignette format of finding meaningful patterns among a multiplicity of sources, drawing together diverse events and actions and providing links, connections, and coherence among them. This was considered fundamental to the narrative research paradigm (Sikes & Gale, 2006).

**Theme 1: Subconscious Behavior**

Subconscious behavior was the experience of perceptions, sensations, and thoughts without being aware that cognitive events were taking place: An unreflective actor (Morin, 2006). Amy ignored feedback that she was given. She stated “I don’t know why I did that. I think that part of it was hubris. I just thought I knew better.” Hope worked on a task and exclaimed: “I did this all off the top of my head not knowing what I was doing.” Ted “lost it” when someone threw his beer at his wife. “I just punched him out…Knocked him down.” Fred described his thinking as he slipped in and out of consciousness: “At any given time I can’t honestly tell you if I’m acting on behalf of my strongest priority. A lot of times I don’t necessarily know what my beliefs are.” Kyle’s subconscious behavior was complete with sound effects. He lost consciousness with an explosion and figured out what he did later.

I had to make a really quick decision. It came so quickly. I said Boom! I’m starting my own business and I don’t remember exactly from that date but I’m there. The decision came out of just pure instinct and then it was followed up with research on how the heck I was going to do all this and yeah, there was probably worry.
Somehow Mary managed to raise two kids and have a successful career as a judge. “It worked so I just did it. And to be honest with you, it was not intentional. I didn't even know I was doing it. I really didn't.” These were all examples of actions performed with little or no cognitive awareness. They were perceived by the participant as happening almost without their control.

Although participants knew that self-awareness was the focus of this study, only Fred discussed it explicitly. Kyle was aware of his constant struggle to hang onto staff. Hope was aware of how she needed to behave in front of government officials. She was also aware of the impact her decisions had on her students. Ted was aware of his long fuse and what was at the end of it. He discussed the ramifications of not telling the truth and was aware of the consequences to his staff. Max was aware enough of his environment that he adopted a mask for certain situations where he felt people needed to see only a certain side of his personality. Fred was aware of himself and everyone around him. He regularly reflected on his behavior and that of others in his surroundings. Mary was acutely aware of how her decisions on the bench impacted her community. She was also aware of the problems she was causing when fighting for changes in the legal system. Don was aware of his inability to lie. He knows that people can sense dishonesty so he was aware of how important it was to be authentic.

This awareness was broken down into four categories in order to further understand the depth of thought involved.

**Theme 2: Self-awareness Level 1**

At this level of self-awareness, actions were taken or observations were made with little or no self-awareness. It was deeper thought than the subconscious thought expressed by
participants in theme one. In addition to the conscious behavior involved, one also experienced perceptual events such as having pain, tasting, or seeing.

Amy talked about her activities once she returned to work after her daughter died. She talked about the things she bought and the tasks she completed. There was no emotional element. Kyle talked about his momentum during his move. “I was so clear in my momentum…” He put his energy behind the way he thought. Although hiring was a challenge for him, he claimed he was “super excited” to hire someone so that she could start working. Hope could not “stomach” what she found out about Scientology and Ted believed that sometimes it was best to make a judgement quickly and adjust later depending on whether he was right or wrong. Max was stunned by a quick decision made by a teammate and Fred commented about an assignment he was being asked to do in terms of his tenure: “My thought was they are not going to accept me as their leader. I was relatively new.” Mary recalled a time in court when she was conducting an arraignment and right there and then on the spot she had to make a decision on whether or not that person went home. She claimed she didn’t even have the facts of the case.

**Theme 3: Self-awareness Level 2**

Each statement at self-awareness level 1 was relatively void of emotion, behavior, or physical presence. In self-awareness level 2, the dialog indicated awareness of presence on environment also known as public self-awareness. This involved visible attributes such as behavior and physical appearance. Amy could see her impact on an employee she needed to let go.

It’s a tough conversation to have and when you have to let somebody go and you have to tell them that the reason is because their work is not good you know it is hard to have that
conversation. You usually know pretty quickly if somebody is going to be able to work out or not workout. I need to bring other members of the organization in to make staffing decisions for me because it makes for a better decision overall.

Amy recognized her position in this situation. She was not thinking about it with any visible emotional component. When Amy reflected about starting her firm, she stated: “I recognized that this was a great change in the direction that this legal industry was going in and it was an opportunity that we needed to take advantage of.” Here she recognized her ability to act. There was still very little reflection or emotion. When Kyle talked about his staffing challenges at this level, there was little or no emotion or personal connection.

There’s a noticeable lack of good communication. I wasn't getting what I needed. I also didn't know how to ask because I didn't know where we were in the process. I didn't I have enough information to make a good decision or a bad decision.

Hope talked about her dealings with the government, explaining the situation in a detached manner. “You can complain all you want. You can rant, rave, do anything that you want but then you've got to go back and you’ve got to build it another way.” Ted discussed an insubordination problem in terms of his physical position in the company. “I was the CEO for heaven’s sake. If I don't re-take control of the meeting then I lose the respect of everybody else.” Max made a statement about authority. He was powerless to fix a problem and had this reaction: “If I had more authority in the organization I probably would have more power to do something.” When Mary had to apply a law in a case, she made the following statement: “I look at community norms. I look at the scope and the breadth and depth of my discretion and then make a decision and how to apply it.”
None of these statements includes self-examination as part of the situation other than in terms of physically being present.

**Theme 4: Self-awareness Level 3**

Self-awareness level 3 added to the visible attributes of level two by including reflection or self-examination in relation to the environment. At self-awareness level three, the dialog was also known as private self-awareness. This consisted of the self-examination of characteristics such as emotions, sensations, perceptions, values, goals, and motives. When Amy examined her integrity in the courtroom, she was speaking at this level. “Sometimes advocating means not telling the whole truth and needing to put a different spin on things. If I were being brutally honest it would not be the reality of the situation.” Here she included a sense of values. In a discussion on letting people go, she stated in an emotional way that she hated to fire people. After Kyle’s divorce he ruminated about the perceptions of having neglected himself. He was not learning new things and felt emotionally stagnant and disappointed.

Hope talked about being defiant in terms of her being able to sleep at night knowing she achieved her goal in “meeting the needs of the students. I was not just making decisions that mean nothing”. On being sent to Scientology school, Hope expressed emotion about the situations as she railed against them.

They hoped that by sending me to St. Louis to learn this Scientology program I would feel better about it and I actually didn't. I refused to endorse it, I adamantly wouldn't… I just wanted nothing to do with it.

Ted showed perception when he realized that just because he was the plant manager “it doesn’t mean I’m right.” Max suggested that some other people on his staff were actually better at quick thinking than he was thus recognizing a deeper sense of himself that has emotional and
motivational aspects. Fred was willing to acknowledge his weaknesses with his team as long as he did not think it is going to undermine his leadership: “I’m completely fine with being able to say that I don’t have the answer and I have vulnerabilities.” His motivation was to improve his situation and that of his team. Mary looked at the people around her, sensed a different realm of thought other than her own and stated: “I do know that people are afraid of me and I probably am not as aware of that as I should be.” Don liked to shake things up every so often. He claimed to need change. When stating “People say it’s hard to change. I still think it’s hard to change.” he expressed emotion.

**Theme 5: Self-awareness Level 4**

When a participant reflected on their awareness, they entered the next level. Self-awareness level 4 was awareness of the act of being aware and the observations about self, boundaries, constraints, in being with one’s own self. This was also known as meta-self-awareness or being aware that one is aware (Morin, 2006). An individual having access to their own opinions, values, goals, and self-memories could be said to have this level of self-awareness.

Kyle expressed his awareness of himself when he claimed he needed to “come to grips” with his scarcity issues. When he learned of his wife’s affair, he observed physical pain and heaviness in his chest that he interpreted as heart break.

I had this physical indicator, this very real physicality of pain and suffering that was slowly releasing and letting go and how we hold on to pain and how we attach and dig our talons into you know attachments of pain and blame and excuses and it’s wild.

While fighting forces attempting to bring Scientology into her schools Hope stated that the issue was making her question whether or not she was wrong and she questioned what she
knew about education and children. This required her to examine her own behavior. She recognized that she was alone and must reconcile this with her sense of values.

Ted recognized the complexity of self that was needed to admit mistakes. “You have to be flexible enough in your own mind…You have to listen. You have to be aware of what’s going on and what’s happening and what’s the best way to correct it.”

Max was aware of always fine-tuning his own internal decision processes. “I know that about myself.” He also stated that he held himself to a very high standard. And while he could be disappointed in himself, he was also good at forgiving himself. Fred talked a lot about his own thought process. He shared that “There may be times when I have a strong reaction that causes me to have a stronger reaction than I might otherwise think.” and “I’m just trying to balance all the competing interests.” He was also aware of being inauthentic when he realized that in this case, authenticity meant to “flip out”. “I’ll try to hide that and try to fix, guide, change the situation in a way that isn’t authentic to me flipping out but instead maybe yields better results.”

Mary examined her decisions that were inauthentic to her and stated “I cannot live with putting a violent sex offender in anybody's neighborhood. That went against my morals. That went against all that I stand for in terms of do no harm, safety, justice, parity, equity.” Don was aware of being scared to start his new business. “…it can be a little scary but I did it. I executed it. It is probably the best thing ever did my life.” He had to let an employee go and shared the following:

So it really did hurt me for a little bit because I was always very personal. I am very personal with the relationships I have with my clients but this was now having to make people decisions and I hate to do that and I feel guilty and lousy. I knew instinctively
that I probably should've done it years earlier but I let it go because I said you know… it's easier that way and I thought it would go away and it didn’t.

Don talked about how he felt about honesty in himself by saying

I’m just not a good liar. So the answer is, as much as it hurts, I think I’m candid to a fault that if I make mistakes, I’m going to fess up to them and I really can’t think of any time when I wasn’t true to myself. It’s just this is the way that I do it and I’m human and I’m going to make mistakes.

In self-awareness level 4, we witness situations that lead to reflection and possible transformation. The opposite is true of the next theme, self-deception.

**Theme 6: Self-deception**

Self-deception was ignorance of or lack of acknowledgement of the core of one’s being. This theme covered artificially constructed perceptions also known as perceptions that were so correct that they were embraced even in the face of conflicting information. It was often a skewing of cognitive awareness in order to find a way to avoid pain and anxiety, a way to cope with life’s frustrations, and make sense out of things that are incongruous (Caldwell, 2009; McMasters, 1999). When Amy talked about herself and her leadership, she used words that did not seem to be based on reality. Her discourse did not match what she has disclosed in her narrative.

I have no natural tendencies that get in my way. I don’t feel I have to overcome something. Everything I need as a human being and a leader, I have. Emotional things do not get in the way of what I have to do.

Amy was critical of an employee mistake in calling a client the wrong name. It was possible that she was mis-representing herself when she claimed to never have done it in 20
years of practice. In order to avoid the pain of firing people, she made the firing process a group process in her mind. “Everybody hates to fire people. Nobody enjoys that.” Amy also did not blame herself for problems in the hiring process. She faulted a “bad match”. “

I don't blame myself because I think that I do a very good job in the hiring process. We spent a lot of time with her, reviewing what we were looking for. I knew her credentials.

I think we did everything that we could to try to be setup for success but it just wasn’t a good match.

Amy had a recurrence of hiring problems. It was possible that since the problem continued to plague her firm, there was some element of self-deception in her thinking. She was perpetuating the problem by not taking direct responsibility.

Another sign of self-deception was the lack of ability to take in feedback when it was given. Amy talked about the person she let go having given her feedback that she found unconstructive. She found a reason to not take it in: “I don't feel that was really legitimate feedback because I felt like she was being unprofessional.” She also stated: “I was never angry. I was never unprofessional. I was just very direct.” Later she stated:

I have a hard time selecting the right people. And even when I realize when I’ve made a mistake, I’ve wanted to hold on to people too long... I like almost everybody so that’s a problem. And I always want to accommodate them.

There seemed to be some confusion and contradiction in her mind about her hiring activities.

When it came to advocating for a client, Amy stated “It’s not so much lying as it is spinning a different truth.” She had made lying more comfortable by expressing it as “spinning a different truth”. Again, it was possible that Amy was not admitting the truth to herself. The
truth might have been that it was important to lie to accomplish her goals. The thought of lying might have been challenging for her to deal with and in conflict with her morals.

Hope, who has led a very successful career, said that “I have never had faith in myself. My husband had more faith than me”. When someone told her that she must be special to do what she does, her response was “I don’t know.” For some reason, Hope deceived herself into thinking that she was less capable than she was. This negative perception of herself probably prevented her from reaching her full potential. This contradicted her many successes as a leader in her industry where her job required confidence and her employees depended on her strength.

Max made it acceptable that he made a mistake by justifying his bad and embarrassing decision with a proceeding rule change that made his mistake tolerable, possibly resulting in feeling less pain. “On the other hand, the best practice recommendations [that I violated] have become more ambiguous so under current best practices, it’s not that bad to have done what I did.”

When Mary faced her position as a woman in a male dominated role, she was possibly slipping into self-deception when she claimed that she did not care.

It never occurred to me to look up and see that my peers were male…particularly on the bench. They were all white men. It never occurred to me to even consider that as a factor. I didn’t even have that awareness because I didn’t care. I didn’t care. It didn’t matter to me.

It was possible that Mary was deceiving herself making her situation easier for her to assimilate.

Don was so conscious of his mistakes that he denied that he learned when he was successful. “I’m not sure I learn from my successes but I learn from my mistakes.” Don denied himself acknowledgement for doing things that work and slipped into a deceptive belief that he
did not learn from success when his assets under management and his large client base, the
books he authored, and his success with the media seemed to prove that the opposite was true.

**Theme 7: Authenticity**

The authenticity theme encompassed manifestations of self-awareness in authentic
behavior. According to Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2001) authenticity and self-awareness
were the most important traits in leadership. An authenticity framework provided the frame for
this study.

Hope demonstrated authentic behavior when she aligned her morals and beliefs with her
behavior by making possibly illegitimate adjustments to her organization’s finances to prevent a
damaging program from entering her school. “I felt secure enough just to do it…It was guts but
it was genuine. This was wrong.” Ted manifested his authentic behavior when he made a
mistake and had to admit it to his team:

> “Hey guys, I think we’ve screwed up here. I’ll take credit for it because it was my
decision but we need to rethink this. Let’s go back and think about it.” Ultimately
you’ve got to get everybody pulling in the same direction and to me that’s the only way
to do it: open and honest.”

Fred needed to get the right team leader in place. “I’ll leave the company if you’d like.
I’ll do whatever you want in order to make the transition well and put together so that the
organization can grow and thrive.” Mary dealt with an insurance law that troubled her. She saw
people having to decide between buying food for their families or insurance for their cars. She
did not think that this was right and led the way for change.

> I was able to share with the legislature the ramifications of those kinds of decisions and
later they amended the law and gave the judge some discretion. If you want to get your
Point across, if you’re passionate about something you may have to take those positions and I have in the past.

As a result of her outspoken behavior, she lost her job and her standing with her colleagues.

I didn’t like what I was getting so I went up to the top. I paid a dear price for that too but I did it. I didn't get some promotions but I did get that cold shoulder. All of a sudden I'm not part of the inner leadership group.

Don had to leave an employer when he felt that the company was behaving in an unethical manner.

I’m supposed to do the best for my clients. I work for my clients. I don’t work for the firm. But they thought that I did so they were doing crazy things and it wasn’t right and that's why I left. So unfortunately it is an industry that nobody trusts and it’s very hard to build that so if you don't have your ethics about you then you’re in trouble. That's why I said I’m doing it on my own now. I just knew I had to get out and I felt miserable and you’re petrified because you’re afraid… I never played the game again doing it the way that they wanted. I just refused to do it. So I think they knew I was leaving. How do I get out of this because this is not what I want to do for the rest of my life? Ultimately we evolved from there to a place where we are making sure that we not only take care of client’s fees but we take care of their lives.”

On letting an employee go, Don faced personal authenticity challenges.

I’ve got to look at the big picture from a corporate standpoint. If this was a friend, I would never do it but I had to make that hard decision and I was going to have her just be there and stay there and I unfortunately I like people and I hold onto people and I trust people. That was a situation where I had to stop in mid-stream and say I have to make a
change here. It was very hard for me as well as her but I had to change in mid-stream and that to me was a hard decision to make… and I feel guilty and lousy but I'm having to do that as we get bigger. So it is hard for me to do it still but I know it's the right thing to do. I know it had to be done and I was very direct with her that this needed to be done and the reasons but it makes me feel guilty. It makes me feel like I'm controlling somebody's life. I'm making a decision whether they're going be able to feed their kid in the next month. It really feels like most things I do very personal. And when you have to make hard decisions, it hurts! But you’ve got to do it. That's the way it has to be done if you're if you really are trying to do the right thing. She wasn’t a team player. She was working by herself. And if you’re going to run an organization, it is the one thing you’ve got to have. They were not being a team player and that's the culture we’ve been able to develop.

On doing the best for clients, it was not about the money for Don. He had to pick the right clients that aligned with who he was and how he worked so that he could be authentic in his leadership. This was the only way he can do it.

There are certain people we just can’t work with and I know it immediately now. I used to take them on and be miserable. But now I understand that. The thing I say to people is the reason you want me is that I’ve had 35 years of mistakes and we learn from mistakes. And that’s where my strength is in terms of building the relationship and I don’t want to work with people whom I don’t trust and I don’t like. It just makes life miserable. So I make mistakes every single day and I’ll be the first one to raise my hand. I think that that’s what makes me better is understanding that I do make mistakes, look at myself and figure out, is this a mistake or isn’t it. I think my employees enjoy working here because
there is no special talk behind your back. We all know each other. We know what strengths are. We know what our weaknesses are and we deal with that and we know now, and everybody does know their position and they know what they have to do and they are working as a team. From what I can see, nobody hides their mistakes. If they do, they do that very well. But they have to deliver. You have to trust people, you have to respect people, you have to be accountable to people. That’s what we instill in everybody. This is what we do and this is how we do it. So if you don’t have those principles, forget it. You’re not going to work here. I think lying doesn’t work. You have to be candid with people when you’re talking to them and you made a mistake and realized it, everyone was actually happier in the process. If people don’t trust me and I don’t trust them nothing can fix that. It can’t happen. It just isn’t going to happen. And the other word that I say is that I want to be protective. I want to be protective of my family, my employees, my relationships with my clients…all these things I want to protect people and provide for people and I think that’s the mantra. When I look at the business I say “Why are you doing what you’re doing?” It’s not because of the money. It’s because you’re trying to help and you need trust and I think that those are the things that make things work.

Theme 8: Deception

Many of the experienced leaders in this study exhibited manifestations of deception in behavior. Amy’s practice would not exist without deception. She was a master manipulator of court judges and clients. She did not feel bad about being deceptive because the behavior got good results for her clients. Kyle made the statement “Fake it till you make it.” His deception perhaps took a more passive form. Kyle gave the appearance of interest and involvement but did
not have the passion or emotional investment to stick with a project. He relied on others to follow through with the work that he started. Hope cooked the books in order to avoid bringing in a program that she felt was detrimental to her schools. She appeared to conduct business in an obedient manner but all the while she was looking for ways to beat the system. “

    I had to defend the parents that made the decision to send their kids to our schools even though I knew the product that we were buying or he was buying went against my morals, my beliefs, went against everything I stood for.

    Ted deceived his employees by telling them that they were in good hands when control of his company was sold. Fred attempted to satisfy requests from one of his managers that required him to keep secrets from his staff. Even though this went against his priority for transparency, he complied. His forced compliance eventually caused him to resign.

**Theme 9: Feedback**

This theme covered examples of how feedback was processed by participants. Successful leadership required self-awareness and self-awareness required feedback (Gregory, Beck, & Carr, 2011; Silvia & Duval, 2001). Feedback was a skill necessary to accomplishing self-awareness and authenticity (Ashley & Reiter, 2012; Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2001; Roberts, 2014; Snowden, 2002).

Amy talked about how she received feedback from staff on occasion. Much of what she mentioned is not what she would consider constructive feedback. Kyle hired a consultant that gave him feedback about his role as a leader with his company. Fred used his environment for feedback. His constant interactions between staff and team provided him with information that he used to reflect on his behavior and circumstances. Mary received feedback about herself from her peers while she was serving in a judicial capacity. Don requested and received informal
feedback all the time from friends, staff, and clients. As a regular in the media, Don got feedback from listening to and watching his own daily performances on radio and television.

Subthemes

Ten subthemes emerged from the data as key aspects of leadership self-awareness and authenticity. The themes were not equal in terms of their occurrence in the data. Only two of the subthemes were expressed by all the participants. According to the participants, these subthemes described experiences that were routine in their daily lives. Although the subthemes were represented in the data in different ways, collectively they represented the characteristics, from the perspective of participants, of the key elements of a leader’s meaning making experiences.

At least two readings were conducted for each transcript to identify subthemes. After the readings, the researcher used In Vivo coding which involved looking for keywords that participants used (Creswell, 2007). Table 6 shows which participants can be associated with which subthemes.

The themes were validated by referring back to the original transcripts of each participant to insure that they were implicitly or explicitly present in each participant’s data. By color coding key words and phrases and attaching a label to the information the researcher kept the data organized.
### Table 7.
**Subthemes and Corresponding Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Amy</th>
<th>Kyle</th>
<th>Hope</th>
<th>Ted</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Fred</th>
<th>Mary</th>
<th>Don</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Issues</strong></td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Blame</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Authority Issues</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Staff Issues</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Trauma</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Automatic behavior</strong></td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Quitting</strong></td>
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<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Split Personality</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Spirituality</strong></td>
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**Organizational Issues**

All of the participants in this study had organizational issues. Since their extensive leadership skills were what qualified them for this research, it followed that they would have an interest in sharing about their experiences within their establishments. Even though they were told that they could talk about anything in their personal lives that they found relevant, they all chose to discuss their organizations and their roles within them. This was one of two themes that all eight participants had in common.

**Blame**

Each participant wanted to talk about blame. Blaming others was a typical behavior found in people who lack self-awareness (Caldwell, 2009; Rose, Rouhani, & Fischer, 2013;
Steiner, 2014). Amy blamed her staff. Kyle blamed his employees. Kyle also took some responsibility some of the time. Hope and Mary blamed the system. Ted took on most responsibility. He did however comment on how other people did not meet his expectations. Max took on some responsibility but saw his role as part of a collaborative team. Fred sometimes created unmitigated blame in order to avoid confrontation with a single individual. He often took responsibility himself. Don seemed to consistently take full responsibility. He talked about being accountable for having created the culture. He talked about all the mistakes he made. He seemed to take responsibility for everything.

Authority Issues

Amy had to work with a flawed legal system and its guardians. She saw her manipulation of that system as important to her clients. Kyle was the only study participant who did not mention issues with authority in his current work. He talked about the difficult position he was in as a result of his previous boss changing his plans at the last minute. Hope needed to deal with state and local government officials. Her relationship was intertwined with a dysfunctional state and federal system which was in a large part the reason for her inauthenticity and deception.

Staff Issues

Amy had a lot of turnover and talked about how she needed to hire employees based on their skills and not because she liked to have them around. Kyle had significant turnover of staff and fell victim to deceptive and malicious actions from disgruntled staff. Hope acted as a liaison between staff and government agencies. She had to deal with the complexity of the communication issues between them. Ted told us that he exploded over the behavior of someone on his team. Max’s challenge was to be able to please different political factions, and create
consensus between them. Fred often found himself acting as both staff and authority at the same time. This was a delicate balancing act for him where he often needed to play both roles at one time. Don talked about treating his staff like friends or family and struggling with needing to fire someone with whom he has had a close relationship.

**Honesty**

Amy was concerned about honesty because her work involved stretching the truth. Her practice often involved deceptive practices and outcomes used in order to provide the best possible solutions for her clients. Ted considered honesty in terms of his own behavior. For example, he wanted to be honest about his mistakes so that he could take advantage of the skilled staff that worked with him. Fred talked about honesty in terms of transparency. He claimed that transparency was one of his highest priorities. He went out of his way to behave in an honest and transparent manner and left certain positions when his transparency or the transparency of others was compromised. Don talked about honesty in terms of being integral. He believed he was only as successful as he was honest, sensing that his clients would pick up dishonest, inauthentic behavior immediately and find someone else with which to work.

**Trauma**

Amy talked about the loss of her disabled daughter. She could not do her work for a year after her daughter’s death. Her identity was so intertwined with her daughter’s life that she did not know if she could still represent disabled clients in the same way. Eventually she recommitted to her firm and to her cause. Kyle talked about the sudden change of mind of his boss and how he decided to move his family to Hawaii without the support of his boss’s firm. He had to start from scratch. He also discussed his wife’s affair that led him into a nasty divorce situation and impacted his thinking and productivity for a number of years. After 15 years,
Hope was still dealing with the death of her husband. She could still hear his voice, encouraging her during difficult times. Mary was a recent cancer survivor who was living each day to its fullest, making the most of her skills and doing as much as she could in her community.

**Automatic Behavior**

Amy and Max had developed their acting to such an extent that it had become natural to them. Max did not have to plan to put on his mask, it just happened. Amy did not need a scheme for her act, just a strategy for manipulating the law. Kyle’s behavior was almost always automatic. He was who he was and did what he did as he moved from situation to situation, and business to business. Ted had told us about the bomb on the end of his fuse. Explosion was not planned. That behavior got triggered if it was provoked.

**Quitting**

Five participants put their jobs on the line for what they believed. Amy contemplated leaving her firm when she no longer felt she could be the “face of disability law” after the death of her disabled daughter with whom she had a strong emotional and identity-related attachment. Kyle quit his first job in Colorado because he had become emotionally invested in a move to Hawaii. Fred left several jobs because he felt he had become a liability and because his morality is compromised. Mary resigned her prestigious position as judge because she could not work within the law and remain true to herself. She left to make better use of her time and to allow her more leverage to make changes to the law which she believed could not happen while she was serving on the bench. When Don felt that the firm he represented had become a detriment to his clients, he left. He had no tolerance for what he saw as unethical behavior.
Split Personality

Hope and Max, both in the education field were the only two who mention a split in their personality. Max could be himself in certain circumstances for example, with his own small team. Hope talked about being open and authentic with her friends in a way that she could not be at work. She also seemed to exhibit authentic behavior with her students. According to Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi (1997), it was possible to have more than one authentic behavior.

Summary of theme analysis

In summary, these eight profiles provided a rich description of how eight experienced leaders view their work, their role, the people around them, and their environment. In the profiles, we witnessed the perspectives of leaders regarding how they saw themselves; how they described their thought process; how they interacted with others; and how they learned.

The eight experienced leaders who participated in this study represented a diverse population. Through their views of their life experiences, they provided meaningful insights into where they had been and how these experiences had influenced and shaped their perspectives. Analysis of the study data of eight of the participants resulted in the emergence of nine themes and nine subthemes that assisted in explaining the mindset of the leaders, their perspective and how they created meaning through self-awareness and authenticity.

This chapter continues with the participant’s narrative vignettes. Interpretations, conclusions, and recommendations for future research will follow in Chapter 5.
Are you there? Are you aware?

The purpose of this narrative study was to present the research findings by sharing individual participants’ stories. The research questions were:

1. How did experienced leaders use self-awareness to make sense of their actions and practices in complex and chaotic environments?

2. How could authenticity theory be used to conceptualize authenticity, particularly in regard to identifying and understanding critical interpersonal processes such as self-awareness and feedback?

Narrative inquiry was used as a means to develop a deep understanding of leader participants. According to Sparrowe (2005) the narrative captured constancy of the self as the self-navigated the dynamic nature of live events. Sparrowe (2005) proposed that authenticity came from the narrative process. The narrative vignettes depicted here were used to capture the evolution of self-awareness in leaders. The stories they told reveal what these experienced leader participants knew and did not know about themselves and their reality. The stories gave this study an inside look into their struggle between being self-aware and executing organizational initiatives in a way that aligned self-awareness with behavior known as authenticity.

This chapter continues by sharing the participant profiles of eight experienced leaders. These profiles were selected as a result of the pre-screen interview data. The participant pool began with 23 participants who were selected but with some data analysis of the richer and more complete profile, the research narrowed the selection to eight to participate in this study. The profiles represented a consolidation of voice recording transcriptions. The leader’s experiences
were expressed through their own words that were captured in the transcripts of the interview sessions.

These narrative vignettes were shared with each participant to ensure that they were accurate and that participant confidentiality was adequately protected.

**Narrative vignettes**

The narrative vignettes in this study were placed in the following order to allow for the best comparisons to be made:

- Inauthentic and Not Self Aware: Amy
- Authentic and Not Self-aware: Kyle
- Self-aware and Inauthentic: Ted, Hope, Max, Fred
- Self-aware and authentic: Mary, Don

In this first profile, Amy shared her perspectives on her work and her experiences.

**Amy: I’m an actor**

I need to be in command. I have no natural tendencies that get in my way. I don’t feel I have to overcome something. Everything I need as a human being and a leader, I have. Emotional things do not get in the way of what I have to do. I am the face of this company. I am always looking for the right maneuver or strategy. Sometimes advocating means not telling the whole truth and needing to put a different spin on things. If I were being brutally honest and dealing with the reality of the situation, the outcome for my clients would possibly be compromised. So it’s not so much lying as it is spinning a different truth.
Amy is a brilliant attorney who founded and now runs her own disability law firm. In the last year, she got married and lost her oldest daughter. It has been a tumultuous time for her. When asked about her authenticity, she responded that being a lawyer means she is a very well trained actor on stage delivering her presentations, bad news or any other kind of message. “I don’t really think about or notice things like my behavior. Later on, I might kind of have a reaction.” “I am not transparent with others. I do not openly express to others how I feel about issues. As a trained attorney, I don’t give that stuff away. Everything is kind of “staged”.”

If my clients had seen how I was really feeling and reacting to work after my daughter died, they would have gone screaming from me because they would not have felt comfortable that I would get the work done for them but also that I cared. After she died, I couldn’t have given 3 flying you-know-whats about what happened here. I didn’t care about my clients and I didn’t care about anything. I’m a mission driven person. For all of my life as an adult, I have been driven to serve people and serve in a role as a leader, an advocate, an ethical and moral compass. I have always volunteered even as a high-school student, as a college student. Even before I became a lawyer, I had passion for supporting people and their struggles as human beings in a challenging society. But at that point in my life, and for about a year, I kinda didn’t care anymore. I didn’t care what happened to my clients. I didn’t care what happened to my staff. I didn’t care what happened to this business and I thought about taking another job and just shutting the whole darn thing down and walking away from my 30 years of mission driven life. It took me a long time to decide if I was going to go back to be driven by that mission and have that mission driven life. I didn’t rush it because I was just going through the motions and until I could recommit myself, almost like having a vow renewal like some people do in
their marriage when they want to recommit, you know, return to their roots of commitment. I felt like I had to do that here. And so for a long time, there was no growth here. We were barely kind of peddling along and my partner was good and did the best that he could but this place really functions around here because this is my mission and my mission is what everybody serves in this organization. I was completely out of alignment with my 30 years of beliefs and morals and functions.

The client services business is a huge distinction for us. We’re in a very different business. We don’t make widgets. We care! So if ever I had really expressed myself about their case or the work during this early period, my clients would never have stuck it out with us. The reason I say that emotional things don’t get in the way is because I have been well trained to compartmentalize and be able to tread water and go through the motions if I have to. At the time of my daughter’s death, I had to do this to survive.

I have some really tough cases. On one side, I’m dealing with government agencies and on the other side I have a really crazy family. At times, neither side is asking for appropriate or realistic things. I have to advocate the position of my client, get the best result for the disabled person, and work within the law. Usually, the family members and not the disabled person are my clients because they are the ones who are paying me. But in order to meet my moral compass, I have to get the best result for the disabled person which requires me to move people around like a chess board. So I move the family in the direction I need them to go. I move the state government in the direction that I need them to go so that the outcome is something that a) is something that everyone else thinks they have thought of, b), is the right outcome for the disabled person, and c) makes me money.
I went into court on a guardianship. We were proposing the mom for guardianship and not the mom and dad. And this is guardianship of a kid who is an adult now who needs a guardian as an adult who’s disabled. He needs a guardian to make legal decisions for him. So I’m chatting with the mom “So remind me again as I’m about to go into this hearing, why is it that we are not proposing dad as a co-guardian?” So she tells me, that first and foremost it is because the son does not work so well with the dad. They don’t have that level of communication even though they are an intact family and they all live at home. And the son wants mom to do it and prefers mom to do it.

Then she said, as a side note that the dad was going to apply for public benefits somewhere down the line which require him to not be a guardian. This is very common. We have certain public benefits that provide resources and supports that a parent can get paid to do. But they can’t be a guardian and get paid to do the care. So that comes up a lot. So, knowing full well that the real big reason is because the adult child does not want to work with dad, I need to manipulate the situation because if I tell the judge that it would open up a can of worms where the judge would want them to explore this a little bit further and get feedback from the disabled person who wasn’t at the hearing. I know full well that I can get the hearing to go through without a hitch if I say the right thing. So I highlight that the only reason that the dad is not being proposed is that he is going to be applying for public benefits where he can’t be a guardian and get paid and these are essential benefits for this person’s adult care. True...But it wasn’t the primary reason. It wasn’t even the seminal reason. And was that a lie? No. It’s something that the judge hears all the time and knows that that’s a very rational reason. So the guardianship went through which is the result that should have happened anyway. I saved my client time
and worry and expense by getting it through this way and not telling the whole entire truth. I feel great about it. It doesn’t bother me at all.

I want to say one more thing. I am a much better role model then I am leader because I think of a leader as more of a manager than anything else. I think that some of the best things that I’ve done in my life in the last 25 years has been more of just being a great thinker and a great role model for both clients and other collateral in our industry.

Amy’s traumatic experience with her daughter’s death caused her so much grief that she knew if she didn’t hide her feelings, if she didn’t use deceptive behavior, she would lose clients: “If my clients had seen how I was really feeling and reacting to the work after my daughter died, they would have went screaming from me because they would not have felt comfortable that I would get the work done for them but also that I cared.” It was interesting to see how well she continued to hide her emotions when describing this difficult time. If there were emotions, they were directed at her firm and her clients. She did not talk about being in pain or missing her child.

Amy had to balance her feelings about lying with her desire to get the best outcome possible for her clients. She was an example of a successful leader who has mastered the art of deception (Axelrod, 2012). She did not hesitate to stretch the truth to serve her clients. She stated “If I were being brutally honest and dealing with the reality of the situation, the outcome for my clients would possibly be compromised.” By saying this, it seemed like Amy had determined that honesty and authenticity was not worth the cost to her clients. She may have been exhibiting self-deception when she said “It’s not so much lying as it is spinning a different truth.” Amy felt that she would lose clients if she was honest with them. “So if ever I had really expressed myself about their case or the work, they never would have stuck it out with us.” Amy
was more in touch with her changes in attitude from the death of her daughter than she was with her work that depended on her deceptive practices. She proceeded to tell a story about how and why she lied to a judge and why what she was doing was acceptable and probably necessary. “I need to manipulate the situation because if I tell the judge that it would open up a can of worms where the judge would want them to explore this a little bit further…”

Amy was aware of her impact on her environment. She knew she was helping families in the most effective way she could. If there was another way to do her work, she was open to it. For now, in the best interest of her clients, she must continue to act. “If there was something else out there that would help even more, I would do that but it’s just not there.”

Amy provided an interesting example of a successful, inauthentic leader. She runs a thriving business and has a substantial following and yet Amy cannot be her authentic self. According to Amy, this would be disruptive to her clients and to the courts. Amy also did not show a lot of reflective behavior. Most of what she did is in part a result of instinct and training. Most of who she considers herself to be was not part of a public persona. Too much introspection was seen as not necessarily useful and often it was painful.

Kyle: Authentic and not self-aware

Fake it till you make it. That’s how I lead. You have to be strong and reveal all your vulnerabilities, struggles, and troubles. In my business there is a lot of chaos and unsettled energy. When people need to turn to someone, they can get strength from someone else’s appearance of strength. I appear very strong and very stable especially given the ups and downs of my business and my divorce. I am not very stable and I am very emotional. I have tools to stay grounded but I think I have to fake it. I’m kind of all over the place. It is weakness to show weakness. I have a consultant who is trying to
convince me to be more vulnerable. He thinks it will help me create a team culture. I don’t want to suffer the consequences of rocking the boat. I never ever like rocking the boat.

When Kyle moved his wife and child from Colorado to Hawaii to start his own import/export business he had no idea what he was going to have to deal with in terms of change. He was dealing with a constant turnover of employees. His wife had an affair and left their marriage. There were many challenging hurdles that had to be climbed. Kyle was still climbing. He had a great mind for new ideas. He had turned to Yoga for inspiration and support. Kyle now runs several businesses simultaneously and is exploring several unique marketing options for several of the businesses he is involved in.

What comes to mind with that is back in 2004 I had just had my first son. As soon as he was born, it seemed he delivered a message that we should move to Hawaii. It was kind of a dream when my first son was born. It was totally in alignment with just me and my family and my wife and her family and there was no resistance just knew we wanted to move to Hawaii so the way I thought I could plan that was to offer to open up a branch office of my employer in Colorado in Hawaii.

We were doing business with Hawaiian suppliers and it was the connection between Hawaii and Japan that I thought made a lot of sense and so with this boss, we had discussions over a number of weeks, several weeks, and he was actually entertaining the idea and oh my gosh, this is happening. This is crazy. I was also going to pursue an MBA and open a branch office in Hawaii. I saw this whole situation fall into place where my experience in Japan and
working with trading companies and opening up an office in Hawaii and getting my MBA were all becoming a reality. Then one day I walked into the office and my boss told me he had changed his mind. He was not going to discuss it. The option was no longer on the table. BOOM! It was like a really quick decision. It came so quickly. I had to say Okay, I'm starting my own business. This is what my business is going to do. This is when we are moving. The very next week I started my business. I picked the name. Put the house on the market and within 6 or 7 months, I had moved my entire family to Hawaii. The decision came out of just pure instinct and then it was followed up with research on how the heck I was going to do all this. I didn't get any push back. Nobody discouraged me.

I was definitely hurt and I was confused by my Colorado boss. No one appreciates what you’re going through when you're confused. I don’t like to use this phrase but “He left me no choice” because it was my choice but I figured out how to go along, and I do this throughout my life now. Thinking a certain way for a period of time builds momentum and you put your energy behind the way that you think. It was a blessing. It was an opportunity that you just handed me but I still had to work through hurt and the fight or flight. I’m engaged. I have to start a business. I have to defend myself. Yeah…and then fear. I don’t recall exactly if I was afraid of anything. I’m sure I was but I knew that I had the support of my family and that really made it a lot easier.

Interesting enough, and this fits in with some of the other points, at that very time is when I really, really got into Yoga. It was a major catalyst to
expanding my world of awareness...moving to the middle of the Pacific to the Hawaiian islands, my family, I had a brand new family and then yoga just inflated it even more. It was like wow. It felt like Yoga was the wind in my sales that propelled me to do all of these things.

I did all these things I didn’t even think about before the decisions were made and kind of thrown in my face. Right after I left the company in Colorado and started my own company, I started the yoga teacher training. I focused a lot on that and the new business so I started them together. Those tools provided a mechanism to do this and get through my moving to Hawaii, starting my own businesses, and especially through my divorce.

So yoga provides mechanisms to deal with stress; the concept of burning things off and letting things go. There are ways to release and let go through the physical practice of yoga and the mental and spiritual practice of meditation. You can just think of yourself as an onion and yoga is a tool that helps you peel the layers away. You just reveal a layer and you say “Oh that is where that was hiding!” and the nice thing about yoga is it provides such a cosmic road map and it makes the universe seem so infinite and our sense of self so infinite. That’s why I wonder: should we worry? Why when we’re really just a blip in the infinite. It helps put things into perspective.

I guess it’s the way I approach failure. It’s about learning about all these infinite possibilities. There is really no room for failure or fear. I think there was very little fear in my move to Hawaii. There was probably worry but
there was more excitement in the process. It made the chance of failure seem less likely.

With my newest venture, at the end of March we had our first group staff training and that's when I basically showed my vulnerability: I don't know what I'm doing. There are a lot of things up the air. We're doing something that no one else has ever done before at least in Hawaii so I'm a Trail Blazer and I need your love and support to get this working. I could see it in their eyes that the people connected with that. This pointed out that there's a couple people in the organization that really need to change in my opinion. It's a kind of a sabotage, sometimes it's not an intentional sabotage but they're not showing up completely and that affects the rest of the team. So it became evident that I really need to love everyone I work with and I just read a Mark Zuckerberg quote that really struck me especially with all the issues that I'm going through right now. He said to only hire people that he would work for himself. It made me think about the people that I've hired maybe because maybe they were a good deal or maybe they were convenient. I'm kind of all over the place with showing vulnerabilities. When I trust and I feel that there's love and community in the company, I am good at being vulnerable. In fact that is my authentic self. It's when I'm unnatural or when I feel I have to be all business that I've got to deal with people who aren't necessarily on board with me, that's when I think that showing vulnerability is a weakness.

You've got to create that team culture so they can become the biggest fan of you and when they become the biggest fan of you then you have a
company culture that will work. I think I appear very strong and very stable especially with the ups and downs of businesses and my divorce and things like that, I am not very stable and I am very emotional and I am actually learning to be more aware and to work on myself and my emotions are more on the surface and so I become more emotional and I fluctuate more. I now have tools to get back to the ground but I think I have to fake it with working with 6 teachers and a business development guy and the sales manager and I’m looking to hire some other people. I’ve never had a big team before. This is a whole different dynamic so I’m learning a whole lot about myself.

I met Beth. She was a gong master. She started just doing bookkeeping for me. When I met her, she had a goal of getting meditation in every classroom in the country so there was some serious alignments about getting meditation so widely spread. That was really appealing to me. So over time, trying things out while she was doing books remotely, I got to a place where I said “Let’s start this business together.” We started as 50/50 partners and we didn’t do very much. In retrospect, we did a great job of branding and introducing it to a certain niche segment but we didn’t do anything to grow the business and I was in the middle of a messy divorce… I had problems right and left. It’s fun to talk about. Yeah. Beth didn’t seem to be putting in as much effort as I expected. I wanted to see her work grow into something and to do something. I wanted her to take initiative on her own. I kept reminding her that we were partners. Initially the structure was built on us doing this together. It soon became very clear that she was not the type of person that had the ambition, the drive, or the
creation mechanism that I thought I needed in a partner. When it became
evident that we weren’t going to be good partners we restructured everything
and while it was very fair for her and she was fine with it, she did feel
downgraded and that created a type of apathy. I blame myself. I definitely don’t
blame her. She really didn’t see the opportunity and never really believed in it.
It’s not blame. It’s kind of like she didn’t see the big picture. I feel like I failed
with her. I took a leadership course with her where you learn that you have to
have open communication. You don’t hold grudges and you connect all these
things and we were doing the exact opposite even after going through all this
training. I was blaming myself. I also view her as a failed business partner and
that has some negative connotations to it.

When I was restructuring things with Barbara, and she wasn’t a
partner, it became clear that she didn’t want to do a lot of the work that she was
handling for the time period before. So I started looking for someone to fill the
gaps and I found someone that had the perfect skill set that I was looking for:
an office manager and a technical background and knew how to do social
media and all of the pieces I was looking for. I was super excited to hire her.
The first month was amazing. She got an amazing website up, rebranded the
logo, created two beautiful pieces of marketing materials. And then things
changed. Being a new mom and having a lot of illnesses caused her to leave
things unhandled. She kept going downhill and she went MIA for two weeks.
She never wrote, left a lot of big projects in the air and I realized I put the
company at risk. Soon, things blew up with her. She has been holding some
company property hostage and hacked at my website and Facebook and Dropbox and then she brags about it on her Facebook page. It’s just really over the top insane. I realized I had to admit it to the whole team like when the website crashed. I felt personally responsible. This was a disgruntled employee with a beef with me. I had this young team. They’re working their butts off and making introductions and just the thought of ...I just networked with 25 people and if they look at the website, it’s going to be down. All that momentum is lost. I felt like, I took on...well this really sucks. I blame myself for not having the systems and doing a better job of hiring but I also blame her a lot. She was really very unstable and completely out of line with the way she handled things. I am constantly amazed at humanity in how people go into a victim role and what malice they create as soon as they come into their victim role, what malice they create as soon as they come into their victim zone, and the amount of malice one can create and is protected from that continues to disappoint me.

I realized in the middle of that that my wife was in the middle of a 9 month affair. To handle that, I traveled a lot. I drank a lot. Also just physically, which is really interesting, after finding out about the affair, my entire chest, my whole chest, my upper chest was like hurting and I didn’t know what it was...like something I had never felt before, and it lasted as I was doing this work and going inside of my feelings it got worse. It’s like this was like weird and it was like this heaviness that just stayed stuck on my chest and I realized oh my gosh, that this was heart ache, that I had a broken heart. It was the first time I had felt like I had a broken heart. Then I was working through it so I had this
physical indicator, this very real physicality of pain and suffering that was slowly releasing and letting go and how we hold on to these...pain and how we attach and dig our talons into, you know, attachments of pain and blame and excuses and it’s wild.

I’m still in Hawaii and I have a thriving business and another child and I did all the things I didn’t even think about before that decision was kind of thrown in my face. To keep myself going, I sign up for leadership training and personal development workshops. I got a lot more in yoga meditation. I learned several new modalities like chanting and Sanskrit and things I had never been exposed to before. These new practices were the only thing that took me from this place of the darkest despair like nothing is going to work out and provide a little bit of light and enough light to keep that door spinning.

Part of coming out of bad times is coming to grips with my scarcity issues. I had to look at finances more closely than I ever have and worry about my finances more than I ever have as a result of the divorce and potentially losing everything and super expensive legal bills. I had to look at my own scarcity and be OK with not having anything. That’s a theme with a lot of spiritualists and zealots and religious figures...the act of renouncing something. I haven’t renounced anything but I’ve gotten a lot closer to the idea and comfort of not having anything. If I do lose everything, it’s going to be totally fine. I will still have the core things in my life: love and respect. Who I am will stay intact even if I don’t have a dime.
“Boom!” That was the sound of Kyle moving into automatic pilot mode so that he could deal with the upheaval in his life. This experience colored the way that Kyle moved through life. “Heck, moving to Hawaii? Absolutely!...Thinking a certain way for a period of time builds momentum and you put your energy behind the way that you think.” Kyle moved through life with abandon. His ideas drove his behavior. He was not often conscious of what was happening to him or why. He uprooted his family, moved over five thousand miles, and started a new business on “pure instinct”. The research, the thought process, if it came at all, came later.

The very next week I started my business. I picked the name. Put the house on the market and within six or seven months, I had moved entire family to Hawaii. The decision came out of just pure instinct and then it was followed up with research on how the heck I was going to do all this.

“I did all these things I didn’t even think about before the decisions were made and kind of thrown in my face.” Kyle stated at times “I don’t know what I’m doing.”

Kyle used yoga as a way to release pressure. Yoga provided him with perspective. Kyle showed an awareness of himself in terms of his environment when he stated that yoga helped in providing perspective. “That’s why I wonder: should we worry? Why when we’re really just a blip in the infinite”. At the same time, Kyle deceived himself into thinking that he has little or no fear of failure when basing his decisions on the infinite and the cosmic unknown. “There really was no room for failure or fear”. Kyle was similar to Amy in that he did not often reflect on his own actions and behavior. Amy seemed to avoid reflection and self-awareness because it was viewed as painful and inappropriate for business. Kyle was driven by action and reaction. Amy was driven by the law. Kyle did not protect or hide his authentic self. People seemed to like who he was. He was open, friendly, and outgoing. On the other hand, Amy was often
guarded and careful with people to whom she revealed her true personality. People liked the persona that she created but they did not know the person behind it.

Kyle was authentic partly because he let himself go in almost every direction and any direction. In almost every action, he was therefore true to himself since his self was seen as infinite. He exhibited vulnerability, a hallmark of authenticity: “I am good at being vulnerable. In fact that is my authentic self. It’s when I’m unnatural or when I feel I have to be all business.” Kyle also embodied another key element of authenticity. He was willing to take responsibility for his actions. He usually did not blame others for things that happened around him. “I blame myself. I definitely don’t blame her.” He accepted responsibility for most of what he experienced in his world. At the same time, he stated that he saw sabotage in his business as “showing up” and thus assigned responsibility to his universe and not to himself. He saw some of this sabotage as people taking on a victim role. He was disappointed by the amount of malice they could create without repercussion. His wife’s affair landed him in a nasty court battle. Because of this experience, he had chest pain and determined that this was what a broken heart felt like. He freely and explicitly discussed the physical manifestations of his torment but his emotional state or his state of mind was buried as if there was little connection between the two. “It was like this heaviness that just stayed stuck on my chest and I realized oh my gosh, that this was heart ache, that I had a broken heart.” Through it all, it is his practice of yoga that takes him “from this place of darkest despair, like nothing is going to work out.

Ted: The long fuse: Deception, self-awareness, and subconscious behavior

I had to deal with a lot of people I had never dealt with before from angry shareholders to analysts and go through all this crap. I was nervous.
Ted was a successful CEO and business consultant. The last time he was appointed as CEO, it was under very stressful circumstances. His friend and former CEO of his company was fired by his board. Ted was asked to replace him after only having been with the company for about a month. “I had to deal with a lot of people I had never dealt with before from angry shareholders to analysts and go through all this crap. I was nervous.”

Ted was influenced by “old-school” relationships that taught him to keep his feelings and emotions well hidden. His dad was a corporate executive on the board of a Fortune 50 company for many years and the Vice President for a number of years. That was how Ted was raised. He knew all his dad’s colleagues and was friends with all of them. They were his role models when it came to behavior under stress. They internalized things. Ted did not know till his dad passed away that he was on the Manhattan Project. Ted never saw him express his thoughts on this externally.

I’ve often told people that I have a very long fuse but it's attached a really big bomb. I’ll be cool calm but then…it’s over. I had a situation where one of my top guys my lead sales and marketing guy just…wouldn't... let... go of an issue and we're in a meeting trying to get something done and he just kept harping on it and harping on it and harping on it. I tried every coercion that I could think of but I just couldn't get him off his point and I finally said “Enough...Get the hell out!” And I threw him out of the meeting. My other staff members were glad that I did that and surprised that I had waited that long. I have a very long fuse and I try to maintain a certain level of rapport, respect, and courteousness with the folks who work with me but at some point enough is enough and this was enough...believe me.
Sometimes because of the situation you are in, you're better off making your judgment quickly, take it down that path and determine quickly whether it’s right or wrong and then adjust. You have to be flexible enough in your own mind that you will recognize that you’ve chosen the wrong path. In many cases people take a path and then continue to reinforce their decision even though it is wrong. And that in itself is wrong. You have to listen. You have to be aware of what’s going on and what’s happening and what’s the best way to correct it. You have to be willing to accept that you made a mistake and to change course because if you keep propagating the same problem, it’s not going to go away. It’s going to fail.

The best way to do that is to fess up. If you’re good, you have good people working for you. If you have good people working for you, by definition they likely understand what’s going on as well as you do. I’m never the smartest guy in the room. Ever! So if I make a mistake and I try to hide it, I can guarantee you...maybe not all of them but some of them recognize it and then you’ll get the side talk behind your back and that’s not a successful way to run an operation. Fess up. “Hey guys, I think we’ve screwed up here. I’ll take credit for it because it was my decision but we need to rethink this. Let’s go back and think about it.” And some of them will be with you immediately and some of them won’t. Ultimately you’ve got to get everybody pulling in the same direction and to me that’s the only way to do it: Be open and honest.

I did something that potentially could have gotten me fired and I was extraordinarily embarrassed by it. This wasn’t a business decision per se but it was related because it was at our company holiday party. We had it at a big facility. All of our spouses are there and we are just having a very enjoyable time. We had gifts for
everybody set along a wall that happened to be by the entrance door that was wide open. My assistant came up to me and said “We have people coming in and stealing some of the gifts.” My wife was with me and she said “I’ll take care of that.” She starts marching over to the door and I said “Oh God. I had better go follow her.” And so she gets into a discussion and these two guys start giving her flack. Crap! Here we go. So I went over and I said. “Excuse me. This is a private party. Would you mind leaving?” “We just wanted to hear the music.” “It’s a private function…please…leave.” And so they reluctantly and with a lot of lip were backing out. I followed them just to be sure and then they started giving me and my wife more lip. One of them threw his beer at her and I lost it…and I just punched him out…Knocked him down. As soon as that happened, all my employees saw it. They came running out and proceeded to beat the snot out of these two guys. There’s a women who worked for me who is beating this guy up and saying “You’re not going to take a swat at my CEO!” This guy is just getting pummeled. And here I’m starting a big fight in a public facility and I’m trying to call my troops off and the guys finally got away. But I had to come in the next day and I had to apologize to my staff. I said “Hey guys. I probably screwed up last night. It may have ended last night but it may not.” But you know, when you’re CEO, you typically have a contract that says you can’t do anything to embarrass the company and that’s something that could easily have been interpreted as embarrassing, particularly if it had made it into the newspapers: “Ted gets into a brawl. Fired.” I was truly embarrassed because I did something that could have brought shame on the company. Remember the long fuse, big bomb thing? This is the perfect example of that. The big bomb…It goes off. I always
As far as alignment with my own thoughts, morals, and beliefs, there was a case where I didn’t lie to the organization. Everything I told them was true but you can color the truth and make it more palatable when you know it’s going to be bad. When we sold control of our company to another company, I tried to figure out how to best spin it. And what I said was absolutely true. I said “You know, looking back over my tenure here, basically when I started, we had 35 million dollars in the bank and no real products. Today we’ve got 57 million dollars in the bank and real products that are being sold.” So I guess that’s not bad legacy and that was actually true. I was going to be replaced by a fellow I knew who had come in from the outside but I had worked with him previously. A very, very smart guy. I portrayed him that way. I didn’t think he was that good of a business guy but he was smart from an R & D kind of perspective. Very smart. And I had to tell the organization: “You’ll be in good hands.” even though I didn’t necessarily think they were, particularly given the leadership of the group that bought us. I knew it was going to get ugly. But I had to spin and put a good face on it and I felt terrible doing that. At the same time I couldn’t say “Hey, you guys are screwed.” You know, I knew that ultimately everyone was going to lose their jobs but it was going to take time because these idiots that were running it didn’t have a clue. Oh it was terrible. I hated it. And making it worse, they had a contractual obligation to me. It was finite but it was not a bad departure so I was going to be OK but these other people weren’t. We were just under 100 people in two different locations and now there are probably just a dozen left.
Ted used a bomb metaphor to describe himself. “I have a very long fuse but it's attached a really big bomb.” He provided us with two situations where in his words, “enough is enough” and the bomb went off. The first situation was with that of a member of his executive team. Ted had to resort to deceptive behavior: “I tried every coercion that I could think of but I just couldn't get him off his point.” When that didn’t work, he blew his fuse and threw him out. Ted knew he required a team. “I'm never the smartest guy in the room.” He recognized that a good team was important and that it was OK to admit to mistakes, to “fess up” and be “open and honest” in order to be able to change direction when necessary. Ted’s second example took place at a holiday party. He was embarrassed by his behavior when he had to “punch a guy out” who was disrupting the celebration. It was the drink thrown at his wife that resulted in the bomb going off. “I lost it and I just punched him out.”

The bomb did not seem to be triggered when Ted had to go against his own judgement and lie to his organization while it was changing hands.

When we sold our company to another company, I tried to put the best spin on it. I didn’t lie to the organization. Everything I told them was true but you can color the truth and make it more palatable when you know it’s going to be bad. He had to tell the organization that they were in good hands “…even though I didn’t necessarily think that they were.” He was also aware of the disconnect with himself: “I felt terrible doing that. At the same time I couldn’t say ‘Hey, you guys are screwed.’”

Ted described some subconscious behavior. His own self-awareness allowed us to see the times when he lost discipline and behavior that was based on emotion. Part of his authenticity was his awareness of his volatile behavior. It has worked for him and it had almost cost him his job. Because he was self-aware, he could keep himself in check in almost any
situation unlike Amy and Kyle whose real selves were either, in Amy’s case, almost totally hidden on purpose, or in Kyle’s case where his personality was exposed almost all the time. Like Amy, Ted exhibited some coercive behavior that he found acceptable. Ted unlike Kyle could never run with abandon. He had too many role models and years of experience behind him that are opposed to this kind of behavior. What Ted and Kyle did have in common was spiritual discipline. Kyle was devoted to Yoga. Ted was an expert in martial arts. Kyle used his spirituality to free himself. Ted used his spirituality to strengthen his discipline.

Hope: Self-aware about being inauthentic

*I normally keep my emotions inside. There are very few people who know the real me. I try very, very hard not to show any body language. In my world, you have to maintain a level of secrecy. If I show my feelings, I won’t have clout or respect. When I am most dangerous, I am silent. I am not a public person. I don’t think that others need to know my trials and tribulations.*

Hope was a successful leader in the education field in which she worked for over 27 years. She ran her school system with a combination of precision expertise and kindness. She knew she is doing important work for at-risk youth. Hope’s accomplishments provided a beacon in an otherwise unserved area of the country where education has been ranked among the lowest performing states. Hope’s work was renowned. She was been invited to speak on topics such as gender education at Harvard University.

Hope told two stories that demonstrated her authenticity, self-awareness or the lack thereof at different times. The first story she told is about a nearly impossible task she was asked to do when she was first assigned to her job. In order to accomplish this task, she went without
sleep for three or four nights in a row. Her second story is about her struggle to keep Scientology out of her schools when her employer brought it in and insisted on its use.

Hope recently went through the death of her mother, father, brother and husband. The losses were painful. She still keeps them close to her heart and still talks to her deceased husband.

I had been on the job for two weeks when I received a letter from the Department of Education. The Federal Department of education was coming to monitor our title one program. It had never been done before, there were no existing protocols to build on, the Feds were coming in 5 weeks. One week from their arrival, I received their 72 page protocol. I tried to get help from the Department of Education and the State Department of Education but they were in the same situation. I suggested we work together but that offer was turned down. So there I was alone and frustrated. I did what I had to do and went page by page looking for evidence that would support this cat and mouse game. You can complain all you want. You can rant, rave, do anything that you want but then you’ve got to go back and you’ve got to do what they ask. It gets very frustrating. It’s almost like you walk through landmines and sometime you just say, “I’m going to do what’s in the best interest of the kids and they are just going to have to slap my hands because you can’t have it all.” It is defiance, I’m sure but I can sleep at night knowing that I meet the needs of students and I’m not just making decisions that have no meaning. Sometimes I internalize “Are you really doing the right thing?” It took me three days of absolutely no sleep. The day that the Feds showed up, I told my staff “You say whatever I say. If you deviate from
me, I will kick you under the table. You will have no shins left. You will follow my protocol because I’m the only one who knows what was produced.” There were 5 Feds that showed up. We started to go through the protocols. I kept reaching behind me and pulling out the evidence. I did this all off the top of my head not knowing what I was doing. After 75 minutes they said “We’re done.” I looked at them and said “Excuse me...” they said “We’re done here. You know what you’re doing. Thank you very much.” And then they left and have never been back again. The following week, they went to visit other schools. I went to their rollout where they produced their report. As soon as I walked in, the feds got off the stage and greeted me and exclaimed in public that the whole department had been saved from any punitive action because I knew exactly what was going on. So that was my example of an uncertain situation. I didn’t have a clue. I needed to make quick decisions. Did ‘em and it worked out well. I think this gave me a feeling of empowerment. One thing that gets me through situations like this is a couple of little words in the back of my head and nose. They are my husband’s words, “You can do it!” He always had more faith in me than I did in my self. I miss being able to talk to him but I always hear those words: “You can do it!” I have never had faith in myself. It was always my husband that had faith. So it’s almost like you walk through landmines and sometimes you just say I’m going to do what’s in the best interest of the kids. They are going to have to slap my hands because you can’t have all these masters and inefficiencies and expect things to go the right way. You just have to do the right thing and wait to get caught.
I got sent to Scientology camp. My boss wanted five of us to learn Ron Hubbard’s way of educating. I was adamantly against this. I actually had to quiet my eyes on what was going on. When it would come up about bringing on the Scientology people to do training with my teachers, I would actually not even show up for work. I would make sure I was someplace else. I think I was the outlier because I tend to be the most defiant. It was difficult because it was the first time that I went against my boss. The week of training did not make me feel better about it. I refused to endorse it. I adamantly wouldn’t. I just wanted nothing to do with it. I thought it was the biggest piece of crap I had ever seen in my entire life. I was not impressed. I thought it was a cult. I still think it is a cult. I could not stomach or tolerate in any way what I found when I researched Scientology and I just kind of kept it to myself. I wasn’t outspoken about my views. I wanted to tell the teachers and principals that it was a bunch of baloney...don’t do it, don’t use it but I kept my mouth shut. I put things in place so that we wouldn’t have the money to do it. That caused it to taper off. I won in the end. It took guts but this was genuine. It was wrong. I knew it wasn’t good for kids. At the same time, I had to defend it, defend our schools. There was interest from the media even though it went against my morals, my beliefs and went against everything I stood for. When a reporter would ask questions and tape responses, I would make sure that they got only obscure, hard to trace information. I was able to find a small part of the program dealing with students using dictionaries. I was OK with that so I could use that one small area to be supportive but everything went against what I stood for. I was misrepresenting
myself. It was a lot of nights pacing the floor. I started to question myself…what I knew about education and children. I questioned my thought process and everything I knew about what kids need to learn and how they need to learn. It caused me to doubt everything. It was one of the hardest things I’ve had to do since my husband died because he wasn’t there to talk to. He knew how to make me think about it and pass the problem off. I had to figure it out by myself. I could still hear his voice: “You can do it!” We got through this because my boss got sick. Slowly I got rid of the materials. I worked closely with the principals, sitting down with them once a month. It took about a year to get everything back on track. There are some days when I lose sleep. And then there are days when you come home happy because a kid who wasn’t able to add 2+2 can do it today. It’s the kids who will walk across the stage at graduation, many of them first graduates of a high school in their families that make it all worthwhile. I have kids who graduated 10 years ago who visit me whenever they are back in town. They always stop by to give a hug. That’s the kid you saved. That makes it all worthwhile.

In this profile, Hope provided a look into her life as a senior authority in the public schools. From a personal perspective, she described how she navigated through the often precarious political environment by using deceptive behavior. “I’d have to stand there and just nod and smile and figure out a way sometimes to gracefully make it look good even though I totally disagreed with what the decision was.” Tasks were often unreasonable and unproductive that resulted in sleepless nights and decisions that were often not the best for her students. Hope described her frustration over these situations and how a memory of her husband’s voice
provided her with encouragement. Hope described how a lot of her work has to be done by making decisions quickly that are often subconscious. She proclaimed “I didn’t have a clue.” and “off the top of my head…” to describe her decision-making process. She was tired, frustrated, and exhausted by what she referred to as a “cat and mouse game.” Hope showed awareness of her authentic self: “You can rant, rave, do anything that you want but then you've got to go back and you’ve got to build it another way.” Hope did not complain much. She kept her head down. Her deception and lack of authenticity showed through when she said “It was best if I say nothing.” She did her job for the kids as best she could even though she stated “I adamantly could not stomach or tolerate everything I researched or looked into.” In an ultimate embodiment of authenticity, Hope stated “You just have to do the right thing and wait to get caught”.

Hope talked about her lack of self-confidence which seemed contrary to what she had accomplished. This could be a form of self-deception or a lack of self-awareness or both. “I have never had faith in myself.” You would not know about Hope’s insecurity if you saw her in the workplace. When confronted with her boss’s Scientology project, she was aware of engaging in deceptive behavior in order to sabotage the project and protect her kids. She claimed that she was defiant as she created misleading stories for the press and financial road-blocks internally that eventually killed the project. In an act of deception and defiance, she talked about her experience with the press: “I made sure they were obscure schools where the reporter would have no idea whether or not they were private or public.” Her ultimate authentic act was to destroy the program and declare victory. “I felt secure enough to do it. It took guts but this was genuine. This was wrong.”
As with Amy and Ted, Hope was in a type of job that seemed to require her to behave in a certain way that reflected the expectations of others. Kyle was the only leader so far (and Don later on) who was in a position where there was no external force regulating his behavior. Hope needed to appeal to government agencies. Amy was required to uphold the law, and Ted was obligated to shareholders to behave a certain way. Hope used subversive, deceptive behavior to get her way. Amy could be more demanding and was not so much deceptive as she was manipulative. Ted also had to stretch the truth to get by.

Max: Self-aware and inauthentic

*I'm always kind of wearing a mask or smiley face. In certain circumstances you need to contain yourself but in other circumstances, it's OK not to. In some contexts, authenticity doesn't pay so it's time to wear the mask. The mask has become second nature. You get good at it and don't think about it.*

Max was a successful director-level manager in the field of education. He was a responsible part of the leadership structure of a predominant college. Although he worked in a highly collaborative and supportive environment, he felt he needed to be cautious in revealing his true emotions in some situations. Therefore, while exhibiting self-awareness at a high level, his performance was not always authentic. He was aware of being divided in his behavior. He wanted to please people but also wanted to be true to his own self-worth. Part of him was an individualist. Part of him recognized that he is a member of a community. He did not want to alienate people. He was constantly balancing between blunt, honest communication, and caring deeply about the thoughts of others. He felt that one of his gifts was being open to at least some of his vulnerabilities. At the same time, he was insecure about being vulnerable. Max related a
story about his past experience because even after 30 years, the memories had stayed with him and to this day had a major impact on how he ran his organization.

On the one hand I’m in a staff meeting with either my staff or I’m a member of somebody else’s staff. Then I think it’s okay to be open about vulnerability. But if I’m walking down the hall, and I’m really in a much more public venue or if I’m presenting in front of a large group for something I’m probably not going to be as vulnerable because I think that in that kind of context, people expect a kind of a rock solid, strong, capable leader and so that’s what I want to project and be for them. I wouldn’t walk down the hall looking at my feet with a big frown on my face because then they will say there something wrong with Max and there might be something wrong with his work and there might be something wrong with the school and I don’t want them to think any of those things so I’m always kind of wearing a mask or smiley face. In certain circumstances you need to contain yourself but in other circumstances, it’s OK not to. In some contexts, authenticity doesn’t pay so it’s time to wear the mask. The mask has become second nature. You get good at it and don’t think about it.

In my current organization it’s a very collegial collaborative situation. We use the consensus model as much as possible where we just always talk and we trust each other and we actually to do sit down and help each other think through things and come up with solutions together and actually change our minds together. So I’m trying to say that in this organization, shared decision making is a value and works really well.

I was asked to provide a computerized solution that involved more technology than what we had been using. We knew we needed something better so I formed the committee. I had a faculty member and a couple of students and we met and we put
together a wonderful proposal. We were convinced that it was a good idea. When we got
to the faculty meeting where we had to present it, there was discussion of course and
somebody said they didn’t want to do it that way and shouldn’t we do this way or
shouldn’t we do that? And so, on the fly, a colleague who was really smart and really
quick thinking came up with a solution that we had not come up with in the committee.
He looked over at me and said “We can do that, can’t we Max?” And I was stunned and
I was thinking...I think I can do that...Yeah, I guess so...And that was the end of the
discussion. The faculty said OK and indeed the project went forward and worked out
really well. I’m working with this same colleague whose intelligence includes a rapidity
that mine does not. I like to think that I am very smart but I know it takes me a little
longer to get there than some smart people. Often I find that my thinking and my
decision-making is vastly better having slept on it. I try to live with the decisions and not
just immediately implement them; sleep on it if possible. I noticed that in the morning,
I’ll wake up and I often will have an insight. I open my eyes, I jump out of bed and often
I’ll have the answer. Or it hits me in the shower. Something about the morning is a
better time for me. Basically it takes me a little longer than some people. I know this
about myself and this is fine with me.

To some extent I am probably always tuning my work and my decision process. I
try to do what I call small incremental change. That’s my best plan of management -
small incremental change. Big vision, radical change is not my preferred style. I go with
my gut instinct. I do that all the time. I feel like I’m a very intuitive person and of course
I am taking in evidence for evidence-based decision-making but I usually contextualize
my decisions as intuitive.
About 30 years ago, I was a line supervisor but I didn’t have any real authority. This organization was focused on health care. We were producing a product which was very important and I observed that our quality control, in this one very particular way, was not good. I was afraid that our product was not safe. This was very concerning to me. So I went to the bosses, the manager of that substation and explained in as much detail as I could without blowing my job or even telling them why I thought what I thought, what they should do and the fact that I’m kind of taken aback by this issue. I could tell that my boss didn’t want to hear this from me. He was probably imagining gigantic political issues behind the facts that I was discussing that would make it hard for that organization to change. I heard later that they did change. But for about a year I was part of an organization that was doing something that I knew was wrong and anyway it was very concerning. It was hard. I knew if I had more authority in the organization I probably would have done something. It was fundamentally a good organization. It had good values. It was helping people live better lives. So even though it had this problem, by and large, it was gigantically contributing to making a better world. So I didn’t quit or storm out or anything and I just sort of dealt with it. And I sort of felt that eventually, the truth that I was aware of would sort of have to come home to them too and I think it did because they did change.

One of the reasons I was aware of what was going on is that one of my friends, one of my co-workers was an example of the problem and so the hardest part for me was not just working for an organization that had a flaw but I had a friendship that had a flaw because he was embodying the problem. I tried talking to him and saying “Don’t do that!” Anyway, it was hard. It was hard. It really was life or death. Their treatment
options were very bad and very minimal. Basically if you got this disease in those days you died with it and so it was very serious. Years later I was at a different job with a different problem. I worked for a boss who played favorites to an extent I found unethical. He would occasionally ask me to do things I knew were inappropriate and unfair. This really bothered me because it was wrong and it was against the principles of the organization. It felt immoral to me. As soon as you realize that an action that you are taking could really hurt somebody, you should try not to do that anymore. It increasingly bothered me. And around that time is when I actually started to look for another job. As a result of this experience, I committed to myself that I would never participate in running an organization this way. Leaving that job included leaving behind my willingness ever again to accept working for someone who insisted that I do something I felt was wrong.

Another way to look at this is that I committed myself to speaking up and disagreeing with management as needed from an ethical perspective, rather than put up and shut up when ethics were on the line. I have put this into practice a couple times in my current job and so far instead of having to quit, I have won the respect of my management for standing on principle and disagreeing with them – even when they worked around me to do the wrong thing anyway. But I had lodged my disagreement, and when those situations became unsustainable even for them, they remembered that I had recommended against those courses of action, and they asked for my help in making things right. The scary part for me through all this is I had to be and I continue to have to be committed to highly ethical work, all the way to being willing to quit (or be fired) as a way to refuse to participate in something wrong.
Max had a divided sense of authenticity. He believed that there were places where authenticity was appropriate and places where it would not work. He was self-aware. He was comfortable showing his true self to his staff. He recognized that vulnerability was a gift that he had that worked in his favor. He could not however freely share this gift.

On the one hand I'm in a staff meeting with either my staff or I’m a member of somebody else’s staff. Then I think it's okay to be open about vulnerability. But if I'm walking down the hall, and I'm really in a much more public venue or if I'm presenting in front of a large group for something I'm probably not going to be as vulnerable because I think that in that kind of context, people expect a kind of a rock solid, strong, capable leader and so that's what I want to project and be for them.

Max stated that “I’m always kind of wearing a mask or smiley face.” further exhibiting his awareness of his own behavior and the deceptive nature of his actions. Max also showed his awareness of himself when he recognized the quick thinking skills of a colleague. “Some others are actually better at quick thinking than I am.” Max was aware of using gut instinct and intuition in addition to evidenced based decision making. Max recalled an earlier time in his career when he attempted to be authentic about a critical issue that was potentially risking lives. Even though the authority in place did not seem to care, Max continued to work in his position against his own moral judgement. In a sense, his willingness to cooperate with the organization and continue his work was a form of deception. When a close friend and co-worker became a part of the problem Max decided to look for another job. This experience had influenced Max’s management style in his current position. Like Amy, Max was an actor. Like Ted and unlike Amy, he was self-aware and reflected on his behavior. He did not have to resort to deceptive
practices like Hope. In his current job, Max took lessons from a previous career and decided that he would rather quit than do something that is unethical. He claimed to have fought and won in this way. His attempts could be an indication that he has changed since his earlier days when he kept working in situations that were uncomfortable for him. He probably would not be as good at spinning the truth as Amy and Ted.

**Fred: Aware of being subconscious**

*When priorities compete*

*If I regularly rely on that it, it might not exactly be true*

Fred was an entrepreneur in every sense of the word. If he was not working on two or three of his ideas, he was thinking about working on two of three of his ideas. He has held leadership roles in his own startups and has worked as the CIO for companies with large and complex high-tech projects. Because Fred worked on many different priorities at once, he was aware of the constant tug.

*At any given time I can’t honestly tell you if I’m acting on behalf of the priority that is the strongest, the one that’s the weakest or the one that’s whatever. I simply know that I act based on something that is a priority to me and on a day to day basis those things may shift. I am perfectly willing to rely on different priorities at different times. If I said, “I regularly rely on Priority X all the time” the statement might not exactly be true.*

*I usually tell people that transparency is my first priority: I like to give my staff and peers as much information as I can, so they are “in the loop”. However there was a circumstance recently where my CEO explained that she was planning to do a complete reorg which would include outsourcing most of my staff, and she explained that I wasn’t*
going to be able to tell anyone about that. In fact, I was going to have to make all my plans in secret, and I had to promise her that I wouldn’t tell anyone. I had to fight to be able to talk about the reorg with one person: my right hand man. So, while I would normally say that my number one priority is transparency, in that particular case I needed to override transparency with a different priority: Loyalty or obedience or keeping my promise. This really hurt a lot because I was basically figuring out what was happening in other people’s lives and I couldn’t tell them about it. That really was something that caused a lot of angst around this idea of competing priorities that I need to attend to within my job. In fact, at some points in the process I felt physically ill while talking to certain people, and I lost my focus because the competing priorities were eating at me: I felt like I was lying to them, yet I knew I had to because of the needs of the boss. In the end, it was one of the big reasons why I decided to leave that position.

The physical sense of something being wrong is something which I don’t always see, so when it comes on strong I pay attention. I have occasionally noticed that when I’m in a situation that causes me angst or causes me troubles that my heart will speed up or my facial expression may give off something I don’t realize. Other times I don’t notice it at all. I have had people ask me, “Do you realize that in that situation you were wearing your scary face?” No! I had no idea. “Did you realize that you were smiling too much?” No… I mean I really had no idea. I am grateful that others can give me feedback that I am reacting in a way I had not realized. I am aware that I lack awareness around the physicality of my emotions: I don’t have the kind of control to present myself emotionally that I think I do. So when I actually DO recognize an emotional response in
myself I will usually sit up and pay attention to it more: I actively try to dig in and understand it, or tell people about it, rather than ignore the reaction.

There may be times when someone does something and I have a stronger reaction to it than I might think I should have. As an example, someone in my organization or my own boss might say “I don’t believe what you’re saying,” or “Is that really true?” or they might come back at me a couple of different times in order to get more details around a question that I think I have already explained. My reaction to that sort of questioning of the truthfulness of my beliefs might be stronger or more strident or more forceful than I think it is or should be. I usually realize after the fact that my reaction has been stronger than warranted and that the probable reason is I’m feeling vulnerable at that time and I need to push back on that vulnerability. I do so in a way that I’m not even conscious of. It just feels like the right thing to do. While after a day or two, I can see that it was maybe because I was vulnerable, I can tell you that in the moment I don’t recognize that I’m reacting more strongly than I should and if confronted with my actions I couldn’t tell you why I’m doing it.

I want to be a strong leader that has the ability to stake out a position...to say “Guys...we’re going here.” and then drive the team towards that goal. That strong belief in a position and the courage to lead to that position is the person I strive to be as a leader. However, there have been plenty of times when, acting as a policy maker or a strategist, I don’t necessarily know what my beliefs are as they relate to our goal. I certainly have my opinions, but I know that they are just opinions and no better or worse than other people’s opinions. There have been many situations where I’m asked to create a policy or construct a strategy with certain things in mind and the honest truth is
that I really, really don’t care about that particular policy or the thing we are trying to do. I’m just trying to balance all the competing interests around that policy or around that thing we are supposed to do and make sure that that balance is achieved. This is the same sort of thing I try to do with my priorities: balance and go with what is best for the organization and the team I’m leading. What that means is that sometimes I end up with a policy or a strategy that I personally look at and say “Well….if I didn’t have to worry about balancing, it’s not what I would do, but everyone else is Ok and we’ll figure this out.” and so I’m acting in a way that is contradictory to my “beliefs” because in that particular instance I don’t really believe in anything. I just don’t care. I’m trying to find the right balance, the right way to split the middle or the thing I’m told we need to do.

Throughout everything I do as a leader, a strategist, and a policy maker, I want to ensure that people understand that I’m a person too. I know I have faults and failings, and as long as I don’t think it’s going to undermine my staff or my peer’s sense of me as a leader, I’m completely fine with being able to say that I don’t have the answer and I have vulnerabilities: That I’m struggling with certain things too. I have noticed that sometimes I go a little overboard in sharing my failings. I will start to back away from this when I notice that it starts to erode someone’s faith in my leadership. So I’m still finding the right balance between a sense of humanity and a sense of what others might define as strong, consistent leadership. The two feelings pull at me different ways at different times: I try to accommodate both.

Fred struggled with his authenticity because he was constantly juggling projects and priorities. “At any given time I can’t honestly tell you if I’m acting on behalf of the priority that is the strongest…” He was aware that he had two consistent priorities: his staff, and his own
and other’s transparency. “I usually tell people that transparency is my first priority: I like to give my staff and peers as much information as I can, so they are in the loop.” He got hurt when he had to override these priorities.

I needed to override that with a different priority which was loyalty or keeping my promise or what have you. And it really hurt a lot because I was basically was figuring out what was happening in other people’s lives and I couldn’t tell them about it.

Fred was aware of the physical manifestations of his behavior when he was not in alignment with his priorities. He got feedback from others about wearing a “scary face.” “I have occasionally noticed that when I’m in a situation that causes me angst or causes me troubles that my heart will speed up sometimes or my facial expression may be giving off something I don’t realize.”

Fred reflected about his behavior. “I don’t have the kind of control to present myself emotionally that I think I do. There may be times when someone does something and I have a stronger reaction to it than I might think I should have.” At times he was aware of being confused and vulnerable: “There have been plenty of times when…I don’t necessarily know what my beliefs are.” Fred was also aware that there were times when he did not care. “The honest truth is that I really, really don’t care about that particular policy or the thing we are trying to do.” He could sometimes find himself caught in a challenging balancing act.

If I didn’t have to worry about balancing, it’s not what I would do, but everyone else is Ok and we’ll figure this out. I’m acting in a way that is contradictory to my “beliefs” because in that particular instance I don’t really believe in anything. I just don’t care.
Fred readily expressed his thoughts about his own vulnerability, humanity, faults, and failings. Fred found it difficult to balance authentic behavior with that of what he saw were expectations that others had of a strong leader.

I have noticed that sometimes I go a little overboard in sharing my failings. I will start to back away from this when I notice that it starts to erode someone’s faith in my leadership. So I’m still finding the right balance between a sense of humanity and a sense of what others might define as strong, consistent leadership.

Fred sounded confused. He was however behaving authentically and demonstrating authentic behavior. He was not concerned about having a mask or persona as is Max or Amy or Ted. He wanted people to know his true human self so he conducted himself in accordance with his inner thoughts. Like Kyle, this made him more vulnerable than Mary, Amy, Ted, or Hope. Kyle was also very open about who he was. Fred however thought about his actions and reflected on feedback and used that feedback to build and grow and react to his complex situations. Like Kyle, it was OK for him to make mistakes. Unlike Kyle, he spent time studying these mistakes and stored information on himself for future use.

**Mary: Self Aware and authentic**

Mary came from an underprivileged family. She worked hard to become a renowned judge and a leader in her community. She was a single mother who raised two kids while she worked her way up the ranks of the legal profession. She was elected into her position on the bench and presided as a judge for over eight years. Following that part of her career, she used her knowledge of the law and of the legal system to make her mark in the fields of health, behavioral health, criminal justice, and juvenile justice. She provided her services on the prosecutor’s side of the law and held the position of public defender. She worked in the courts,
was a member of the police force, and she had worked in schools. She was newly retired and continuing to support the community where she spent her life. She was in constant demand for her advice and encouragement. She ran her own consulting firm and took on special projects for local organizations.

It worked so I just did it. And to be honest with you, it was not intentional. I was doing all this and I was raising my kids by myself. I was always looking at the paycheck...How can I support my kids? What can I do? How do I get from here to there?

I didn't even know I was doing it. I really didn't. I got a lot of counsel and guidance. Someone I knew actually sat me down and said: “You know Mary, you’re a women in a predominantly male field. You’re a young woman. You’re a tall woman. You’re a brown woman. You’re a beautiful woman. Do you understand how intimidating that is?” It never occurred to me to look up and see that my peers were male...particularly on the bench. They were all white men. It never occurred to me to even consider that as a factor. I didn’t even have that awareness because I didn’t care. I didn’t care. It didn’t matter to me. I was going to do what I thought was right.

I started as a kid working in what they called JPTA, federally funded programs for the poor and I came up the ranks. So I worked in health, behavioral health, criminal justice, and juvenile justice. I sat on the bench. I've been on the prosecutor’s side. I've been on the public defender's side. I've been in the courts. I’ve worked with the police. I’ve worked with schools. I love working with kids and doing diversity programs and after school programs.
I was faced with different situations when I was on the bench. Simple little things like: I'm going to make a decision about a sentence and I look at the individual before me. They may be from a different culture and the crime they committed might be OK in their culture but not my culture. I will look at the individual. I will look at the laws that apply and then make a decision that I think is fair and just, not only to the victim but to the individual that I'm sentencing as well. It's a process. I need to think about everyone and everything involved. I sit in the courtroom. I look over the bench and I see the defendant and the defendant is hoping I'm going to be a soft judge and the defense attorney is hoping that I'm up on the law. I look at the victim, the prosecutor. They're going to go for the worst sentence. I look in the gallery and I can see the defendant's family and they're weeping and they're hoping that I'm fair and just. I see the family of the victim who's hoping that I am hard and going to make it difficult for the defendant. And I look at the law. And I have to take all of those factors and make a decision that I can live with, that I think is fair and just. I look at community norms. I look at the scope and the breadth and depth of my discretion and then make a decision. Taking someone's freedom away is a serious decision. I'm doing an arraignment and right there on the spot I have to make a decision whether that person goes home that day or not. I don't even have the facts of the case. So those are the kinds of things that I take into consideration very quickly. It's part of my training and probably part of my life experience. You know I've lived in this community my entire life. And I did not grow up with a silver spoon in my mouth. I know what being homeless is. I know what it is like to be a single
mom raising children and having to make a decision. Do I buy car insurance because that's a lot...or do I pay the rent? I understand the person deciding between these types of decisions. There was a point in time I was the presiding judge of the county and legislators would call and say “If we enact this law, what will happen? What will happen in the courts? What will happen? What do you think the impact is?” A very simple example is: mandatory car insurance. We all understand why we need to have that but to have mandatory penalties and a 1,200 dollar fine if you were caught with no insurance and as I explained earlier you know you have people who barely make that in a month and have to make decisions about you know, food and shelter. So I was able to share with the legislature the ramifications of those kinds of decisions and later they amended the law and gave the judge some discretion. The reality is you want insurance. You keep fining them 1,200 dollars. They can't pay you but they're going to keep driving because they have to work. So why don't we put the incentive so you get insurance? I'll reduce you fine to 50 bucks. Show me you got insurance. I want a six month policy. I knew that was going to be hard on them but I also knew that with a six month policy they might be able to make it up in time and continue to support their family. And a lot of the legislators didn't understand or didn't think because most of them don't deal with that level of poverty and what the ramifications of those decisions are. Simple little things like that I feel very proud of the work... I can see my hand prints all over this community. I can see them. I know what I did.
That was one of the reasons I was such a thorn in the system's side and quite frankly held me back on other promotions. Now this is when I left the bench and I was moving back into my community work and I was working with the seriously mentally ill. My job was to transition people from the State Hospital back into community settings. So they've had their treatment, they're considered stable, ready to get back into the community. I had some issues and still do to this day, with moving sex offenders back into the community. There are individuals who committed sexual offences but were never convicted, never went to court, have no criminal record. They were treated... but as we know, there's no treatment for sexual offenders. To this date there is no treatment. And I was required to transition them back into neighborhoods to communities and I wouldn't do it and I didn't do it. I was figuratively held in contempt by my employer. This is your job. This is what the law says you have to do. You have to do it. I came up with alternatives...I came up with some great alternatives. Housing a sex offender in the community requires intensive management. Very expensive. When you're a convicted sex offender, a violent sex offender you literally are followed 24/7. So in my mind that's as much as incarceration. They don't work. It cost the taxpayers a ton of money. I wanted to establish a working co-op farm. I had someone in the outskirts of the community in that Coolidge area who was selling a working ranch. I said: Put 'em on the ranch. They're strong, they can work and be productive...You can do that if you have a program for rehabilitation, safety to community. No, no. You can't congregate them because it would be contrary to their integration in the community but you're
putting them in the community that will kill them versus putting them in a safe environment where they can learn skills, be productive and less harmful to the community. I can live with that. I cannot live with putting a violent sex offender in anybody's neighborhood. I don't want them as my neighbor. I don't want them as anybody's neighbor.

But I also know that whatever role I'm sitting, whether I'm a judge, or I'm in the prosecutor's office leading paralegals and preparing cases, I have to understand my role at that time in that moment and make decisions based on what's expected of me by bringing to bear my experience.

I think the majority of people who came before me when I was on the bench weren't criminals. They were not bad people. They were good people who made bad decisions or good people and bad circumstances. People were suing each other or they were being sued for having done something or not done something. Not because they didn't want to, because they couldn't. People lost their jobs so I had to kick them out of their apartments for the landlord to get their apartment back. There are people with mental health issues that I had to deny their freedom and put them in jail because I knew if they would get back on their meds they would be stabilized and I couldn't depend on the behavioral health system to manage and follow them and keep them on their meds so I had to incarcerate them. That pissed the crap outta me. Those are the moral issues that I fought. Why am I incarcerating this homeless man because he is off his meds? Because the behavioral health system and their outreach couldn't find him.
That went against my morals. That went against all that I stand for in terms of do no harm, safety, justice, parity, equity. It’s one of the reasons I left. I left that profession. I was done. I was finished. I was ready to go on my own and then in the community as an individual consultant, independent. I no longer wanted to be muzzled. I no longer wanted to live by anyone else’s rules that went against what I believe. I’ve been in multiple fields in the last 40 years. All the stuff that we’re seeing in Baltimore, it’s been predicted. We have programs that we’ve developed to help kids but because we don’t want to invest in prevention we have to spend big money later on. Not even on intervention, just maintenance. So yeah. There has been a lot of times that I walked away just because I couldn’t stomach it anymore. But that doesn’t mean I stopped. That just meant I took another avenue to act in advocacy. A lot of people asked me why did you leave the bench- such a prestigious position? I said because you know we have this illusion that our criminal justice system is probably the best in the world but it is not a just system. And so, after the eight years, I was done. I just didn’t want to do it anymore. It wasn’t fun. I had done all I could do. I brought attention to what I could. And I will tell you I had great success. It wasn’t all failure. I had a wonderful time. I met good people. I met a lot of like-minded people.

Those are the things. Those are the injustices in the system. I work with systems. I try to get these systems to collaborate. My personal opinion is if we would coordinate all of our systems together there would be enough money for everything we want to do. And it would mean greater clarity on where we should focus other than on the political arena. That’s what frustrates me. It’s the
electorate who elect these people. You know you’re not going to put your money in early intervention prevention or education if certain people are elected. Instead you’re going to build another jail. So what culture are you developing? So it's those of my personal beliefs based on my life, what I saw, and how I grew up. I am a champion. I know how to champion the poor. I know how to champion those who have not. I don’t know how to champion those who have.

It took a colleague to point out the obvious to Mary. “You know Mary, you’re a women in a predominantly male field. You’re a young woman. You’re a tall woman. You’re a brown woman. You’re a beautiful woman.” That awareness was an awaking for Mary who had such a genuine concern for the law and the people around her in her life that she didn’t care. It would have been inauthentic for her to have a focus on herself given the severity of her circumstances. “I didn’t care. It didn’t matter to me. I was going to do what I thought was right.” She expressed her awareness of her impact on her environment. “It’s a process. I need to think about all involved. I sit in the courtroom. I look over the bench and I see...” Her work required her to process a complex situation and come up with a solution that would fit with the different circumstances of her court. Included in these factors was the rule of law. Even with all these influences Mary demonstrated her authenticity as she used her own sense of self to resolve issues. “I have to take all of those factors and make a decision that I can live with, that I think is fair and just.” Mary described her own upbringing as the root of her experience and how she used this experience to deal with the complexity of her work.

It's part of my training and probably part of my life experience. You know I’ve lived in this community my entire life. And I did not grow up with a silver spoon in my mouth. I know what being homeless is. I know what it is like to be a single mom raising children
and having to make a decision. Do I buy car insurance because that's a lot…or do I pay rent. I understand the person deciding between these types of decisions.

Based on her life experience and her observations on the bench, Mary fought with the legislature about laws that she felt were unjust. She described herself as a “thorn in the system’s side” and risked her job for the possibility of more fairness for the people of her community. Eventually she left her prestigious position on the bench to work with people at risk in her community.

To this date there is no treatment for sex offenders. And I was required to transition them back into neighborhoods to communities and I wouldn't do it and I didn't do it. I was figuratively held in contempt by my employer. This is your job. This is what the law says you have to do. You have to do it.

Mary could not do a job that went against her ethics and morals and so she left. “I no longer wanted to be muzzled. I no longer wanted to live by anyone else’s rules that went against what I believe.” Mary found alternatives to act in advocacy.

Mary and Fred had authentic behavior in common where they had strong moral and ethical beliefs. This was different from Kyle’s authenticity. He may also have been operating from a moral and ethical base. The difference was that he was not as directly aware of it and did not reflect on his beliefs as did Mary and Fred. Mary quit her job to remain true to herself. This was not the case for Amy, Kyle, or Max who continued to work in situations in which their beliefs were not aligned. This would not have been tolerable to Mary.

Don: Purposeful authenticity to the core

*I think lying doesn’t work. You have to be candid with people when you’re talking to them and we made a mistake and we realized it and everyone was actually happier in the*
process. You can’t hide yourself. You are who you are and when you try to hide yourself, all that does is cause other people to think, “How do I figure this person out?” I think candor and being straightforward and being positive is much more important than anything else we can do. You have to be who you are and work with your strengths and have the people around you make up for your flaws. Authenticity is an innate part of our business. There’s only one reason why people come to us. It’s because they trust us. If you’re not the real deal, people can sense that…like a dog.

Don was the founder and CEO of a successful Financial Planning firm. He regularly appeared on television and radio, has written many books, and has won many awards for his work in financial planning. He was married with two grown children. He was a hard worker who had experienced many ups and downs of business ownership. In the past year, he merged with another firm and had about 4 times the staff and distributed leadership. Don believed that respect and positivity were important when running a business. He did not like making the tough decisions and had been known to put them off when possible. He believed that showing vulnerability was a strength.

We’re human. We make mistakes and it’s much more of a problem if we don’t fess up…The person that thinks they have it all together has more problems than you can imagine. If you feel like you have to be totally in control, you’re not in control. Honesty and integrity were the most important attributes to Don. He felt that it took tremendous honesty and integrity to show fear.

It’s too stressful to have to be right all the time…To me, control means, you do what I say. No one wants a boss like that. We’re not generals. We work as a team. The whole issue is about control. Nobody’s in control.
I guess I'll go back to when I made a transition from working for the institutional environment to working for myself. It took me a long time to get to that transition because I felt very comfortable in the corporate world but what happened is I was working in an institution that really wanted to do things a very different way. I didn't agree with that and as a result of that I said “I have to get out of here. I have to leave this organization. I’m not sure where I'm going to go, what I want to do or where I'm going to do it.” But probably within a matter of 30 days I took all of my business from the other firm and started the business that I’m working for now. I thought about it for a while but I had to make a decision because the old organization wasn't going to pay me what they said they were going to pay me. There is something known as an advisory account where you pay a fee. Well guess what? Theirs wasn't an advisory account. It was fee in lieu of commission so they were forcing me to do transactions because that's the only way I can get paid and I wasn't paid as an advisor. I was paid as someone that now was supposed to do transactions and I said “We’re out of here.” It’s just a matter of getting out fast. I’m supposed to do the best for my client. I work for my client. I don’t work for the firm. But they thought that I did so they were doing crazy things and it wasn’t right. So unfortunately it is an industry that nobody trusts and it’s very hard to build that so if you don't have your ethics about you then you’re in trouble that's why I said I'm doing it on my own now. I just knew I had to get out and I felt miserable and you’re petrified because you’re afraid that they are going to try and maintain your book and keep your book. I never played the game again doing it the way that they wanted. I just refused to do it. So I think they knew I was leaving.
I said, “I have to get out of here.” It doesn’t feel right. I don’t like the institutional feel of the organization. I don’t like the bad news, the publicity. I said, “I’ve gotta be on my own.” How do I get out of this because this is not what I want to do for the rest of my life. Why do people have to pay a 5-8% commission every time they buy something. Why don’t they buy something and we’ll charge a flat fee--have no conflicts of interest and be able to set up our own system to do that. I was the first one to do that by setting up what was called a C-Share mutual fund. Ultimately we evolved from there to making sure that we not only take care of our client’s fees but we take care of their lives. A lot of what we do is to try to make sure that people are connecting their money with their life. And that’s what we’re doing and that’s where the relationship comes into play. I believe that when you’re 48 years old and make a transition like that, it can be a little scary but I did it. I executed it. It is probably best thing ever did my life.

I wanted to build my own organization with the right people that I could trust but it’s more than trust. You have to be a team player and when you’re three or four people in office you’re really a team. You’re just together. But I think it was me having to think from an institutional level what’s right for the organization and in the process I had to make some changes. I had to let an employee go who had been working with me for a long time. I had to step back to be more corporate and say what’s best for the new firm and not what’s best for me. Or what’s the best person to support me and not go by the person themselves. It really did hurt me for a little bit because I was always very personal. I am very personal with the relationships I have with my clients but this was now having to make people decisions and I hate to do that and I feel guilty and lousy but I’m having to do that as we get bigger. So it is hard for me to do it but I know it’s the
right thing to do. I know it had to be done and I was very direct with this employee about the reasons but it makes me feel guilty. It makes me feel like I'm controlling somebody's life. Like I'm saying I'm making a decision whether they're going to be able to feed their kid in the next month. We put a package together and all the rest but it really feels like most things I do very personal. And when you have to make hard decisions, it hurts! But you gotta do it. It's my fault. I created the culture. That's what you're doing in an organization. The toughest thing is creating a culture and we had a culture that wasn't working right and it's because I wasn't playing the role of the owner so to speak. I was playing a little bit more of the role of a friend and the only way that I think I could have gotten out of that is by doing what I did. I knew instinctively that I probably should've done it years earlier but I let it go because I said “eh, you know... it's easier that way...” and I thought it would go away and it didn't.

Maybe I’m tougher on myself than anyone else but I think I’ve made a lot of bad decisions. In fact, when I go to clients, in many cases...and that probably isn’t the way I should start out but it’s my personality, if someone asks me the question: “Why should I work with you?” The first thing I say is maybe you shouldn’t because I don’t know if we’re a right fit. People say “What’s your minimum?” And what I say for my minimum is, “My minimum is I don’t want a jerk as a client.” I want people I can connect with and that are on the same page. There are certain people we just can’t work with and I know it immediately now. I used to take them on and be miserable. But now I understand that. But the thing I say to people is the reason you want me is that I’ve had 35 years of mistakes and we learn from mistakes. And that’s where my strength is in terms of building relationships and I don’t want to work with people whom I don’t trust
and I don’t like. It just makes life miserable. So I make mistakes every single day and I’ll be the first one to raise my hand. I think that that’s what makes me better: understanding that I do make mistakes, look at myself and figure out, is this a mistake or isn’t it? So I make a lot of mistakes and that’s OK. I remember when my son was younger. He was very fastidious growing up and I remember every day, I would open the door, let him out and say “Have a good day and make mistakes!” So that’s what we do...make mistakes.

In my organization, there is no special talk behind your back. I just say it. We all know each other. We know what are strengths are. We know what our weaknesses are and we deal with that and everybody does know their position and they know what they have to do and they are working as a team. From what I can see, nobody hides their mistakes. If they do, they do that very well. But they have to deliver. You have to trust people, you have to respect people, you have to be accountable to people and it has to be done in the way of the company culture. That’s what we instill in everybody. This is what we do and this is how we do it. So if you don’t have trust, respect and accountability, forget it. You’re not going to work here.

I think lying doesn’t work. You have to be candid with people when you’re talking to them. We made a mistake and we realized it and everyone was actually happier in the process. I’m a lousy poker player. I think I wear my self out on my sleeve so to speak. I’m just not a good liar. So the answer is as much as it hurts, I think I’m candid to a fault that if I make mistakes, I’m going to fess up to them and I really can’t think of any time when I wasn’t true to myself. It’s just this is the way that I do it and I’m human and I’m going to make mistakes...I must have done something somewhere.
My value proposition these days is, “What’s your perfect day?” I want to have a
perfect day because I want to do the things I’m good at, the things I’m best at and the
things that I enjoy. But as to my morals, and to my ethics, I think it’s just too hard to lie.
I’m not smart enough to remember to lie. So I think I’ve been very, very candid in every
situation, so I …Oh g_d…I’ll go back and think about it…Was there ever a time? I’ll get
back to you on this.

If people don’t trust me and I don’t trust them nothing can fix that. It can’t
happen. It just isn’t going to happen. And the other word that I say is that I want to be
protective. I want to be protective of my family, my employees, my relationships with my
clients…all these things I want to protect people and provide for people and I think that’s
the mantra. When I look at the business I say “Why am I doing what I’m doing?” It’s not
because of the money. It’s because you’re trying to help and you need trust and I think
that those are the things that make things work.

If I could lie…Would I? I hope not. I really hope not.

Nothing was going to keep Don doing something he did not believe in. “I have to get out
of here. I have to leave this organization.” This was Don’s reaction to being faced with having
to conduct business practices that did not align with his core values and beliefs. He looked for
and found alternatives.

I’m supposed to do the best for my client. I work for my client. I don’t work for the
firm…we’ll charge a flat fee--have no conflicts of interest and be able to set up our own
system to do that. I was the first one to do that.

Don talked about trust and teamwork. Unlike Amy, he struggled when he had to let an
employee go because he felt responsible. “I am very personal with the relationships I have with
my clients but this was now having to make people decisions and I hate to do that…” More so than any other participant, Don took full responsibility for his actions: “It's my fault. I created the culture.” Like Fred and Mary, he thought deeply about his own behavior and was often reflective: “Maybe I’m tougher on myself than anyone else but I think I’ve made a lot of bad decisions.” When a potential client asked Don why they should work with him, his response reflected the importance of relationships in his life. The sale is not a priority. “The first thing I say is maybe you shouldn’t because I don’t know if we’re a right fit.” Like Fred and Ted, Don was not only aware of his foibles; he embraced them and used them to build a team and a practice.

But the thing I say to people is the reason you want me is that I’ve had 35 years of mistakes and we learn from mistakes. And that’s where my strength is in terms of building relationships and I don’t want to work with people who I don’t trust and I don’t like. It just makes life miserable.

Don would not lie under any circumstance. He was unique in this way. “I’m a lousy poker player. I think I wear my self out on my sleeve so to speak. I’m just not a good liar.” Like Mary, and Ted, his inner self was a protector. He protected his friends, family, clients, and business: “I want to be protective of my family, my employees, my relationships with my clients…all these things I want to protect people and provide for people and I think that’s the mantra.” Even when asked if he would lie if he could, the response is a genuine and resounding “I hope not. I really hope not.”
5. **Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion**

**Overview**

This study explored how eight experienced leaders used levels of self-awareness to execute their plans, influence their organizations, and achieve their goals in a way that was authentically aligned with their morals, values, and beliefs. Using the theoretical frameworks of Roberts’ (2014) authenticity theory and Morin’s (2006) levels of self-awareness, the researcher captured the narrative voices of these experienced leaders for their stories to be heard.

The research conducted for this dissertation study used a narrative format to provide stories from the experience of leaders, using their own words to describe their challenges and how they viewed themselves and their accomplishments (Creswell, 2008; Sikes & Gale, 2006). This study and its conclusions provided a response to the need for greater clarity on the relationship between self-awareness and authenticity. Based on the previous studies of Roberts (2014) and the work of Morin, (2006), greater insight into the dynamics of self-awareness which led to greater levels of authentic leadership in individuals (personally) and workplace (professionally) was of critical importance.

There were nine major themes framed in this research effort: (1) subconscious behavior, (2-5) four levels of self-awareness, (6) self-deception, (7) authenticity, (8) deception, and (9) feedback. There were nine sub themes: (1) organizational issues, (2) blame, (3) authority issues, (4) staff issues, (5) honesty, (6) trauma, (7) automatic behavior, (8) quitting, and (9) split personality.

This study was exploratory in nature with findings based on interview data obtained from the participants. Both deductive and inductive data surfaced from the content of individual
narratives and were coded and analyzed using thematic analysis methods (Boyatzis, 1998; Lieblich et al., 1998). The findings were described in detail in Chapter 4.

**Discussion of Findings**

**Findings Related to the Research Questions**

This section discussed the findings as they answered the two research questions in this study.

1. How did experienced leaders use self-awareness to make sense of their actions and practices in complex and chaotic environments?

The results were that only one of the eight experienced leaders studied (Don) was successful in leading their organization authentically, was consistently self-aware, received the feedback necessary to be reflective, and was able to express their awareness without reverting to deception (Covey, 2004). A second participant (Mary) came close in being consistently self-aware and authentic but did not receive regular feedback. The cost of that authenticity was her job. The other experienced leader participants showed more of a mix of self-awareness, inauthentic behavior, deception, and authentic behavior that manifested from a deceptive practice (Covey, 2004). Most of the participant leaders were in situations where revealing their authentic selves would have been inappropriate some or most of the time. Either there was a lack of alignment between the leader and the task, the leader and task objectives, the leader and the team working on the task, or there was misalignment between the leader’s personal context and their role in their organization (Covey, 2004).

In many cases, being authentic meant putting the leader’s job at risk. To most of the experienced leaders who were interviewed, survival meant a compromise of integrity and while they were not necessarily happy to comply, they regularly did. In other cases, they used
deceptive behaviors or practices in order to get a result which, deep inside their authentic self, felt like the correct one. While they may have done something which was socially incorrect, internally inauthentic, or even illegal, they were able to obtain a desired result, help their clients, keep their paychecks coming in, and keep their processes running smoothly for their organizations and their customers.

When self-awareness did have an impact, it was usually at the highest levels of awareness. This was found at both the private level of self-awareness and the meta level of self-awareness (Morin, 2006). The private level consisted of characteristics such as emotions, sensations, perceptions, values, goals, and motives. It was considered an advanced level of self-awareness because it was more conceptual than the lower levels. This corresponded to the lowest level of emotional intelligence referred to by Goleman (1995). The peak level of self-awareness was meta-self-awareness or being aware that one is aware (Morin, 2006). This was described as having access to one’s own opinions, values, goals, and self-memories or awareness of being aware.

Evidence of the use of these two levels was rare. When it was apparent that private or meta-self-awareness was being employed, it was usually for the purpose of behavior modification, examination or improvement of interaction and feedback, as a reality check between cognition and feedback, or for accountability purposes. For example, when participant Amy was aware of her emotional disconnect with life and work after the death of her daughter, she used her awareness of herself to create distance from her firm when she thought she could not compartmentalize her feelings. “If my clients had seen how I was really feeling and reacting to the work after my daughter died, they would have gone screaming from me…” Ted used meta-self-awareness to “fess up” if he made a mistake. This allowed him to change direction
when necessary and access the talents of the other members of his team. Max regulated his behavior expectations through meta-self-awareness. Based on his own knowledge of the speed in which his brain processed information, he recognized that by taking the time he needed, he could make better decisions. Others may have been faster and he was “OK” with that. “I try to live with the decisions and not just immediately implement them; sleep on it if possible.”

Fred practically lived in a state of meta-self-awareness. He was constantly aware of his own thoughts related to shifting priorities and used these to create a flexible decision-making process. “I am perfectly willing to rely on different priorities at different times.” He scrutinized his own behavior constantly and adjusted the way he interacted with others accordingly. “There may be times when someone does something and I have a stronger reaction to it than I might think I should have.” His meta-self-awareness made him aware of his vulnerability which encouraged him to take in feedback so that he could make changes in order to make decisions and balance priorities.

Don used his meta-self-awareness to create an environment where he could be honest with his employees and his employees could be honest with him.

In my organization, there is no special talk behind your back. I just say it. We all know each other. We know what are strengths are. We know what our weaknesses are and we deal with that and everybody does know their position and they know what they have to do and they are working as a team. From what I can see, nobody hides their mistakes.

The number of experienced leaders who demonstrated a lack of self-awareness, engagement in deception, inauthentic behavior, and compromised integrity made the researcher question if self-awareness and authenticity were in any way indicators of successful leadership. It was obvious from this study that some experienced leaders could exist, and even thrive, with
minimal or intermittent self-awareness and authenticity. If that was true then perhaps there were other traits that needed to be considered to compliment this pair (Covey, 2004).

Without self-awareness, a person could have the best training, good ideas, an analytical mind but they will not make a good leader (Goleman, 1995). Many authors supported the idea that being self-aware and performing authentically was a better choice of leadership style than deception, if one could choose, but the data from this study indicated that leaders did not always have that choice.

2. How could authenticity theory be used to conceptualize authenticity, particularly in regard to identifying and understanding critical interpersonal processes such as self-awareness and feedback?

Authenticity theory was a multidimensional theory that was rooted in the fields of psychology, physiology, sociology which included elements of person-centered psychology theory, self-based theory, self-determination theory, and leadership theory. Using this framework allowed inclusion of not only self-awareness but of self-awareness action known as authentic behavior (Roberts, 2014). This research question explored the challenge of identifying and understanding these critical interpersonal processes.

Roberts’ (2014) authenticity theory was the multidimensional frame within which this researcher presented the voice of the leader in narrative format to show how leaders apply self-awareness. Other theoretical frameworks considered were more limited than Roberts’ (2014) authenticity theory in terms of the scope needed to understand both self-aware behavior of leaders and how that behavior impacts their organizations (Mohrman & Lawler, 2012; Zaccaro, 2007).
As data was being collected, it was also analyzed through the lens of self-awareness according to Morin’s (2006) self-awareness theory. The combination of theories from Morin (2006) and Roberts (2014) provided a scope that allowed for inclusion of live participant behavior that resulted from self-awareness of the lack thereof (Mohrman & Lawler, 2012; Zaccaro, 2007).

Roberts (2014) created the Role-Specific Evaluation of Authenticity in leaders (REAL), instrument, a tool that was used in this study as a measure of authenticity in the study participants. The REAL instrument, used for its coverage of all four components of authenticity theory, (self-awareness, self-knowledge, self-regulation, and authentic behavior) informed the creation of the interview questions used in the semi-structured one-on-one interviews with participants.

**Findings Related to Context**

Each experienced leader in this study had a unique and challenging reporting situation. All but one leader had to rely on deception to be successful. The administrative and political circumstances of each situation were such that inner alignment leading to authentic behavior was a challenge. The timing wasn’t always right to behave authentically. Deception was often necessary for an authentic result. The environment and job responsibilities were not conducive to authenticity. The behavior of the people surrounding the leader was not always supportive of authentic behavior. In these contexts, the ability of each leader to align their inner selves to their goals and behave authentically was limited.

Three of the eight experienced leaders who participated in the one-on-one semi-structured interviews, Don, Amy, and Kyle, worked for themselves with accountability to their clients and customers. Fred had a similar situation working as a consultant and answering to his
clients. Don’s situation was unusual. He had the luxury of only taking clients with whom he felt he could be authentic and he also had the ability to hire and fire his staff. The other leaders were caught with people, tasks, systems, personalities, and situations, that were not as ideally suited to their personalities and therefore they had to more regularly perform like an actor on a stage and compromise their authenticity so that they could fit what they thought the expectations were of the people with whom they regularly interact. The work of Amy, Hope, Max, and Fred depended on this behavior. Kyle, like Don was a leader who was running his own organization, had hiring and firing authority, and had more freedom to behave authentically than the other participants. Kyle could be himself because he had created an environment where he was able to float freely and intuit his way through his various responsibilities without much accountability. In this way, he seemed to be authentic but his level of self-awareness and the connection between the two was questionable. He had almost a lackadaisical attitude about his work, his clients, and his success.

Two participants, Mary, and Amy had to be accountable to the structure and rigor of the legal system. The law had little or no flexibility to allow a person to act in a way that was fully aligned with their authentic self. To Mary, the law seemed almost a force against authentic behavior. She fought this and insisted on doing what she thought was right and lost her job. As a court judge, she was not welcome in her profession because of her authentic behavior and had to leave her position. “I was a thorn in their side.” Amy got good at deceptive acting in court and through deception became a valuable member of the legal community. As an attorney, success was a matter of deception in action. In fact, very little authentic behavior was evident in the case of the law firm that did not originate from deceptive practice. Amy freely admitted to “spinning the truth” for the benefit of her clients.
Max, Hope, and Ted had peers, boards, and superiors to whom they reported. Max worked within an established Ivy League school system. He had to work within the scope of responsibilities set down by his institution to be successful. This did not always allow him to be himself and he regularly found himself wearing “a smiley face” mask to get through his day and achieve his goals. Hope described a vast set of protocols within which she had to operate. Expressing her feelings about the effectiveness of those protocols to state and federal government officials was not part of her job. Working within the system and insuring compliance was her job. This was not a climate that was conducive to authentic behavior.

Ted had to fit a corporate role. He was required to look the part through discipline, perseverance, and self-denial, and act the part of someone who was always strong and infallible to the public. Unless this was Ted’s normal persona, just by the very nature of having to take this on, Ted lost his ability to be authentic.

Ted was the only one who self-professed to have an inauthentic style. He attributed this to his father who was his role model and encouraged emotions to be internalized behaviors. Ted probably would not consider himself as behaving in a professional manner if he was authentic regardless of the circumstances. For this reason, Ted’s authenticity would probably have been a challenge for him irrespective of the circumstances. That did not mean that Ted’s actions did not represent his inner most beliefs, but rather that Ted’s outward behavior would not be a part of the authentic outcome.

Don was the near-perfect example of peak self-awareness and authentic behavior. He accomplished his authenticity by creating his own environment that fit his persona down to the clients with whom he worked. His constant analysis from the media provided his feedback mechanism. At least once per day, he was required to create and read content on a local radio
channel. This media exposure resulted in Don critiquing himself and his performance, what Morin (2006) and Urdang (2010) referred to as self-observation. According to Morin (2006), self-observation was a powerful form of feedback and was the ideal feedback situation for a leader who wants to be authentic. The regular feedback from the media provided input to the feedback loop necessary to be self-aware.

**Conclusions about Context**

The unique and challenging reporting situations of most of the experienced leaders in this study required deception to be successful. At times, deception was necessary to produce an authentic result.

Not all contexts were conducive to authentic behavior. Some work, occupations, and some circumstances required deceptive behavior to accomplish authentically based actions. Leaders who were deceptive with themselves and those around them in these environments were not necessarily bad leaders. Depending on the circumstances, they may have provided a valuable, authentic service to their organization, customers, and clients by acting deceptive to achieve a desired result. While the process used to get results may not constitute an alignment, the results were often optimal in terms of authenticity. In these situations the leader decided that a result which was seen as ideal by the authentic self was better than following a process which was aligned with the authentic self but that yielded an inferior result. For most intents and purposes, the experienced leaders studied in this inquiry acted in a way that made it appear as if they had concluded that the ends truly did justify the means as long as the ends conformed to what their authentic selves believed were the “correct” or “best” results (and they did not get caught).
According to the research in this study, there were often valid reasons to not be authentic. There could be business reasons for deception. There could also be personal reasons for inauthenticity. If being authentic meant being disruptive, angry, disconnected, disinterested, or even violent because of a personal situation, manifestation of authentic behavior in these cases could cost someone their job, their organization their work, and their clients great loss and casualty.

The combination of self-awareness and authenticity might be the most important set of traits that a leader could have (Ashley & Reiter-Palmon, 2012; Axelrod, 2012; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2001, and Snowden, 2002) if authentic behavior was always possible. Given that these circumstances were rare, the need for additional constructs became apparent to the researcher. According to the data in this study, if it was possible to be a great leader in less than ideal circumstances with compromised authenticity or self-awareness then additional traits were needed for a leader to be successful.

Findings Related to feedback

The skill of sending and receiving feedback was an essential leadership capability that was directly attributed to leadership self-awareness, authenticity, and effectiveness (Ashley & Reiter-Palmon, 2012; Axelrod, 2012; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2001; Snowden, 2002). Don, who was the most self-aware and authentic, was in constant self-evaluation mode which meant he also received the most feedback. According to Morin (2006) people who worked in the media or in performing arts had a tendency towards self-criticism. Part of their job was to receive regular feedback from not only the people around them but also from the unforgiving camera and microphone. As a result of constantly receiving feedback from these sources, they tended to be more reflective and more self-aware. This might be the reason that Don showed up
in a much more effective way when it came to authentic behavior. Don was the only one of the participants in this study who received feedback on a regular basis and in a formal, structured manner. His feedback came mostly from his regular radio and television presence. The other participants recounted feedback events but these were usually one-time occurrences.

**Conclusions about feedback**

Feedback was regarded as critical to self-awareness and authenticity. Learning was perceived to occur through feedback. Feedback from others was found to be directly related to a leader’s understanding of their behavior and of the changes necessary to recognize and avoid mistakes (Goleman, 1998; Karpman, 2012; Rose, Rouhani, & Fischer, 2013) and yet, feedback was found in only a limited way in seven out of eight of the participants in this study.

Most leaders and their employees were operating with insufficient feedback. If self-awareness and authenticity were important, organizations and their leaders needed to add regular feedback into their infrastructure and training for all employees and the leaders in the company. Morin (2006), Rose, Rouhani, & Fischer, (2013) stated, and the findings in this study concur, that one of the easiest ways to provide feedback was to regularly record, and review staff interactions in meetings, on phone calls, while conducting public speaking events, and in any place where interaction with others was involved.

**Implications for theory and practice**

Experienced leaders who were seen as authentic, demonstrated alignment of their inner most thoughts, morals, and beliefs with actions and results. They were in touch with their feelings. Their sense of right and wrong was manifested in their behavior, actions, and outcomes. They had a sense of moral code that they believed in and they stood for what that code represented in their environment whenever possible. Standing up for others, for students,
for the under-represented, for the good of the organization, for clients, was what kept the authentic and self-aware leader motivated (Ashley & Reiter-Palmon, 2012; Duval & Wicklund, 1972; Axelrod, 2012; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2001, and Snowden, 2002). The question arises as to whether leaders with these motivations were always authentic. Did this mean that authenticity was not on occasion accomplished through deceptive means? Most of the experienced leaders interviewed as part of this study realized that to be successful, their actions could not always be in alignment with their ethics or their principles or the people around them. Therefore, they often resorted to deceptive or inauthentic practices in order to keep their jobs and protect their organizations. For some experienced leaders, authenticity battles were selected, won, and lost with great frequency. They saw the loss of a battle as part of the job and continued to participate in their environment when another goal could be found that aligned with their beliefs. If they figured out that deception was the best way to get the result that they wanted, and that that aligned with their inner self, they would not hesitate to put their own feelings aside and adopt a behavior or practice, filter or mask in order to achieve their ultimate, authentic goal.

Given that six out of eight of the experienced leaders who were studied had a tendency to incorporate deceptive behavior if it seemed like the best way to achieve goals, then self-awareness and authenticity on their own on were not enough to create a successful leader. Being self-aware and not acting on one’s beliefs meant that one was being deceptive in one’s environment and inauthentic or deceptive behavior was usually the result. It has been argued that this was not an effective way to run an organization (Ashley & Reiter-Palmon, 2012; Axelrod, 2012; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2001, and Snowden, 2002) but it may have been the only way for the leaders in this study to run theirs. Given these circumstances, this
researcher believed that other traits, like conscience, passion, vision, and discipline needed to be added to the list of top traits for being a successful leader.

- **Conscience:** The overlapping of moral law and behavior, an innate sense of justice, fairness, of right and wrong and
- **Vision:** Having vision means having the ability to see a future state. This includes developing a sense of self, a unique mission, a role in life with purpose and meaning.
- **Passion:** Manifesting optimism, excitement, emotional connection and determination. It is unrelenting drive and enthusiasm that makes a person part of a solution.
- **Discipline:** The execution, making it happen, getting things done. It is doing what is required to realize a vision (Covey, 2004).

It is possible that being authentic with little or no conscience was the cause of many problems in the world related to leadership. History has recorded great leaders who may have been authentic criminals, thieves, cheaters, and swindlers. Many leaders may have had harmful or greedy intentions. History was full of leadership examples that resulted in great harm to people. These leaders may have been self-aware. They may have been authentic. But they didn’t seem to have conscience. This researcher concluded that based on the deceptive behavior present in most of the participants in this study, that conscience should be added to the “most important” traits list. If conscience was included along with self-awareness and authenticity, the researcher believed that there was more of a chance that authenticity would prevail. If conscience triumphed under deviant circumstances, then authenticity might not be encouraged and objectively immoral results would be less likely to occur.

Being authentic could mean engaging in deceptive practices in service of providing a higher moral or objective outcome. Some of the experienced leaders studied were insubordinate
or deceptive in their behavior when their jobs required them to do things that they felt were immoral and when deception could yield a preferred outcome that was aligned with their goals. Based on this study, most leaders could not be authentic. Therefore, encouraging self-awareness and authentic behavior in leaders needed to be combined with other key traits that inform authenticity.

The participant Hope changed the finances of her organization to prevent Scientology from entering the curriculum when she felt that that was not in the best interest of her students. But she had conscience and passion to guide her which might make her infraction understandable and forgivable and her result, a reflection of her authenticity. Inauthenticity also occurred with Max when he kept his job even though it bothered him deeply that the organization was functioning in a way that was causing injury or even death to constituents. Perhaps it was to keep his job or perhaps it was in the expectation that someone else in his organization would eventually see what he saw. In any case, he kept his job long after improper procedures were uncovered. Max also wore a mask: put on a “smiley face” to mask his true feelings in order to keep his job. But Max had a conscience and eventually left the job that caused a moral dilemma for him. He had the discipline to control himself while still on the job and make sure that the good work that was being done continued.

Which has the researcher posing the question: If a leader was not self-aware, was it possible to be authentic? If a leader’s morals and ethics are on autopilot or remain unexamined as they seemed to be with Kyle, it might be more difficult to be insubordinate, be authentic, or be deceptive. How could a leader be these things without having the self-knowledge that gave a person a foundation to rebel against? Kyle had conscience to guide him but only a fleeting
passion for his work. He did not have the vision or discipline to see it through and yet Kyle was a successful leader.

**Suggestions for developing self-awareness**

**Using Recording Media**

Personality psychology research studies have been conducted that conclude that when people were exposed to self-focusing stimuli such as video recordings of themselves, audio recordings of their own voice, live audiences, and even mirrors, self-attention results (Morin, 2006; Urdang, 2010). Some celebrities, who frequently got exposure to self-focusing stimuli, were found to be more engaged in self-observation and to have a more highly developed level of self-awareness (Morin, 2006). The one participant in this study (Don) who consistently demonstrated a high level of self-awareness was someone who had daily exposure on television and radio.

**Executive Coaching**

This study supported the use of an executive coach for any leader who would like to improve their feedback process and develop their self-awareness. The nature of a leadership position was that it was set apart from most other organizational positions. For the participants in this study, there was a certain amount of isolation in their positions that limited the feedback process. An executive coach could provide feedback and opportunities for feedback within the organizations that these leaders serve and possibly diminish the isolation of their position.

Executive coaching was described as an effective method of developing leadership self-awareness (Kombarakaran, Baker, Yang, & Fernandes. 2008; Gregory, Beck, & Carr, 2011). The process was described by Kombarakaran et al. (2008) as an interactive process between senior executive and coach that improved leadership effectiveness by improving cognitive self-
awareness so that new behaviors could emerge. Kombarakaran et al. (2008) posited that an executive coach could assist a leader with transitional challenges through the examination of personal management style, especially critical if the leader had problematic attitudes and behaviors.

Executive coaching could afford a leader a chance to reflect and examine behaviors that were barriers to performance and allow the leader to expand their personal options for exploring and developing new problem solving options (Kombarakaran et al., 2008; Gregory, Beck, & Carr, 2011).

**Landmark Education**

Leaders could consider taking training classes in self-awareness and authentic behavior. Landmark Education specialized in these areas and offered extensive leadership classes that included training and coaching in authentic behavior, self-awareness and various aspects of cognitive leadership. Landmark training was available in 22 countries and has been responsible for training over 2 million leaders. Landmark and its subsidiaries held memberships in the following professional associations and organizations:

- American Society for Training and Development,
- International Society for Performance Improvement,
- American Management Association, and
- Academy of Management.

Each year, more than 188,000 people participate in its courses worldwide.

**Recommendations for future research**

This exploratory research was only one of many possible approaches to the study of self-awareness, authenticity, and career success at the individual level of analysis. This study could
also be replicated with a larger sample of participants. Future research could include other cross-disciplinary approaches or explore similar concepts from the organizational level of analysis.

The findings and conclusions of this study surfaced a number of issues and limitations that require more research:

- The study could compare Western and Eastern leadership styles. The leaders in this study all represented only Western leaders from The United States of America.
- When is self-awareness inappropriate? There are times when great leadership requires quick decisions. Under these circumstances, it could be seen as paralysis if one was to stop and take time to reflect. How does this need for quick, decisive behavior impact what we think and know about self-awareness?
- This study uncovered many instances of deceptive behavior. More research would be needed to determine if deception was a result of being self-aware or if it came from a lack of self-awareness.
- Authenticity theory contained four major components, only two of which, self-awareness and authentic behavior, were the focus of this study in order to contain the scope of this study. Further research could be created to include the remaining two areas: self-knowledge and self-regulation.
- Study participants undergoing media training to determine if self-observation results in higher levels of self-awareness as posited by Morin (2006).
- Provide audio and visual feedback mechanisms to leaders and organizations and measure the results to see if increased feedback results in an increase of productivity, self-awareness, and authenticity.
• Some participants claimed that they had different standards for their personal life than they did at work. Through authenticity and self-awareness training and assessments, compare authenticity in people who were highly self-aware in their professional life with their personal life to see if there is any difference.

• The participants in this study were limited to leaders. Studies could be expanded to include larger samples representing a broader demographic. A non-work sample could be included.

• Inquire into what deceptive behavior and what the frequency of this behavior says about society. What does this say about those that comply, defending the judgement calls of others that are invalid, incorrect, or immoral; the research behind it flawed, and created in a vacuum? A large and diversified body of literature suggested that although people thought they knew themselves well, in actuality they did not. It was posited that people engaged in a wide variety of self-serving bias (e.g., self-enhancement, self-inflation) to protect their self-esteem (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Gardner, Gabriel & Hochschile, 2002; Sedikides & Gregg, 2003); this bias distorted self-information and led to erroneous self-perception (Morin, 2006, p.10).

**Conclusion**

Self-awareness, leadership, authenticity and feedback were the individual constructs that were supported in this study. The literature posited that the most important traits found in successful leaders were authenticity and self-awareness (Axelrod, 2012; Boyatzis, 2007; Collins, 2001; Collins & Porras, 2004; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2001; Sparrowe, 2005; Sosik & Megerian, 1999; Tsui & Ashford, 1994; Walumbwa et. al., 2002). The literature also stated that if leaders were to build relationships and create meaningful change, they must spend time
reflecting on and learning from their knowledge, skills, values, and feedback to and from others (Gregory, Beck, & Carr, 2011; Nesbit 2012; Silvia & Duval, 2001; Sosik, 2001; Steiner, 2014). While this seemed like the kind of behavior that should resonate in successful leaders, it was not consistently demonstrated by the participants in this study. This study showed that there were many experienced leaders who, to the contrary, acted subconsciously, deceptively, automatically, or on instinct. While it made sense that experienced leaders learned from mistakes through self-awareness or by reflection on feedback elicited through feedback from others (Karpman, 2012), the behavior of the participants in this study would suggest that there may be other important constructs that are required for successful leadership. Ashley and Reiter-Palmon (2012), Axelrod (2012); Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2001), and Snowden (2002) suggested that the skill of sending and receiving feedback was an essential leadership capability that was directly attributed to leadership effectiveness. Feedback was not found to be consistent or effective in most of the participants in this study. There seemed to be many experienced leaders who did not possess this skill. It remained to be seen if their practices would be improved by a rigorous feedback process. Being authentic and self-aware was easy when everything in the world aligned with one’s morals and ethics. This study of experienced leaders revealed that being consistently authentic and self-aware were behaviors that did not occur often. For most of the participants in this study, alignment of behavior with ethics, values, and moral judgment was something that often did not exist, required deceptive assistance, or existed in small pockets, when necessary, if convenient, or as needed. Participant Hope talked about the cat and mouse game. Max described his own small team as being safe but needing to be careful outside of his safe environment. Mary was
forced to retire because she could not go along with what she thought was wrong. She could not play the game and so she was forced out of her prestigious position.

From this study, a greater question stemmed about the leader who was self-aware and authentic but practiced deceptive behavior and conducted what many would consider immoral or unethical practices. This person might have a deviant sense of right and wrong. If this deviance showed up in professional behavior, would we consider adjusting our definition of what makes a successful leader so that some basic form of conscience could be included?

To say that self-awareness and authenticity were the two most important traits of a leader ignored the current state of leadership deception in behavior that might require the fundamental deployment of conscience in decision-making. Conscience needed to be included when attempting to provide suggestions for guidance to leaders and potential leaders.

Perhaps the important part of self-awareness was the reveal of one’s true nature. If the underlying intent was conscience based, it would be a benefit to find a way to promote authenticity. If the underlying intent was to do harm or damage, perhaps authenticity should not be encouraged. The participants of this study seemed to be on the side of conscience regardless of their authenticity, self-awareness, or the lack thereof. But what of the person who was determined to do harm? Could they be trained to think in a different way?

Epilogue

This study focused on providing a voice of the leader on topics not found in the literature in a narrative format. There was not an abundance of narrative research on leaders probably because access to experienced leaders was usually limited due to many circumstances such as availability, time, or reticence on the part of the leader to reveal personal, sensitive information. The researcher noted that experienced leaders were often guarded about their persona, which
made it difficult to obtain their personal perspective especially if the perspective was on something as challenging as authenticity, deception, and deceptive practices in the workplace.

The researcher therefore was surprised at the accessibility and honesty of the leaders in this study. They seemed comfortable with the narrative format and the interview process. They revealed themselves in a very personal way. Even when they found the topic challenging, they were more than willing to share what they could about their self-awareness and bouts of deception.

The researcher believed that utilizing the informal nature of the interview process was the most appropriate way to overcome some of the research barriers preventing leaders from being open and honest. It turned out that the experienced leaders in this study valued the process and wanted to add their own questions and fashion their own stories not so much as to answer the questions asked by the researcher but to learn something new about themselves. They used the interview process as an opportunity to reflect in ways they had not done previously. They were thankful for the opportunity to participate and expressed that they thought that the subject was important.

When the researcher finished with Amy’s interview, she asked if the researcher thought she was a good leader. The researcher hesitated and then answered:

According the literature, no. You are not. According to real life, to what you’ve accomplished, the great role model you are for families all across your state, how much your clients have come to rely on you, and based on my experience of you as a leader, I would say you’re the best.

Being a good leader takes a variety of different skills, traits and abilities. Even if you had those, extenuating circumstances could play a role in causing a breakdown or failure. And if
extenuating situations did not dissuade you then there was enough context and politics around to get in the way of success. And let’s not forget a little thing called luck.
References


2003.


Appendix A. National Institutes of Health Certificate of Completion

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that Patricia Steiner successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 03/09/2014

Certification Number: 1424223
Appendix B. Assurance Form

Northeastern University
Human Subject Research Protection

Institutional Review Board

ASSURANCE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Investigator(s): Bryan Patterson, Principle Investigator; Patricia Steiner, Doctoral Student and Researcher

Title of Proposal: A latitudinal study of leadership development through authenticity, self-awareness, and feedback

To give assurance, please read and initial each statement, then sign below.

1. I have read and understand Northeastern University's Policies and Procedures Concerning the Protection of Human Subjects and the Federal Wide Assurance. I give my assurance that I, and all members of the research team, will adhere to the policies in this research.

2. I assure that no participants will be recruited or enrolled, and no data will be collected, without current, written approval from Northeastern University, and other sites as required.

3. I assure that the rights and welfare of all participants will be protected according to the procedures approved for this project by the NU IRB.

4. I assure that all risks or discomforts to subjects will be clearly explained, and that I will demonstrate how risks are outweighed by potential benefits to the subject or by the importance of the knowledge to be gained.

5. I assure that the informed consent of all participants will be obtained by methods that meet the requirements of Northeastern University's policy and assurance procedures.

6. I assure that no changes in research activity will be initiated without prior NU IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazard to the subjects.

7. I assure that I will report any problems involving risks to human subjects or others promptly to the Office of Human Subject Research Protection.

8. I assure that there are no financial or other relationships (e.g., stock ownership, advisory board, speaker's bureaus, honoraria) that might be viewed as creating a conflict of interest.

Signature: [Signature]
Date: 3/24/2015

Principal Investigator / Faculty Advisor

For student research, the faculty advisor is the principal investigator for the study and is primarily responsible for the ethical conduct of the research. Faculty must review and approve student research prior to submission for NU IRB review. Student investigators must sign this Assurance also.

Signature: [Signature]
Date: 3/24/2015

Student Investigator DEPARTMENT-CHAIR/PROGRAM DIRECTOR SIGNATURE (Required) I am aware that this protocol is being submitted to the Northeastern University IRB. I do not make any assertions about human subject protections for this research project.

Signature: [Signature]
Date: 3/24/2015

Northeastern University - Human Subject Research Protection
Rev. 5/28/2015
Appendix C. Recruitment Email

Date __________

Dear __________

My name is Patricia Steinr. I am a student at Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies, where I am completing requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. I am seeking participants for my qualitative study of leaders in complex environments. The purpose of my research is to understand the decision making processes of leaders specifically those that involve self-awareness processing. My interest in this topic comes from my own background having been a business advisor and consultant for over 20 years. Therefore, this topic is of personal and professional interest to me.

You are a potential participant because you are a successful leader who has been in your position for over 10 years. Your participation in this narrative study will be in the form of a survey possibly followed by a semi-structured interview.

- The survey is preliminary, up to 15 minutes in duration. This will be an opportunity for the researcher to get an assessment of your self-awareness skills which will guide her in creating a framework for semi-structured interviews.
- The semi-structured interview will last up to 90 minutes. This interview will consist of additional questions regarding your leadership experience.

Participation is voluntary, confidential, and there will be no personally identifying information about you in the study. If you agree, a pseudonym will be used. Even if you agree to participate, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide to participate (and I hope you do!), please send an email to me at steiner@husky.neu.edu. If you have any questions about my study, or would like further information, please do not hesitate to contact me by email or by phone (808-292-0655). I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you so much for your consideration.

Sincerely Yours,

Patricia E. Steinr, Doctoral Candidate
Northeastern University, Boston, MA
Email: steiner@husky.neu.edu
b. SIGNED CONSENT FORM

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies

Name of Investigator(s): Bryan Patterson, Principle Investigator; Patricia Steiner, Doctoral Student and Researcher

Title of Project: How leaders learn: A latitudinal study of leadership development through authenticity, self-awareness, and feedback

Dear PARTICIPANT NAME:

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study. If you decide to participate, please sign this statement and return it to me. I will give you a copy to keep for your records.

You are being asked to participate in this research because you are an experienced leader over 18 years old, with at least ten years of experience in a leadership role. Your experience has provided you with knowledge of leadership roles that is relevant to this study. By examining leaders in their work environments and by looking specifically at a leader’s self-awareness skills, this study aims to gain a better understanding of leadership performance as well as a better grasp of how self-awareness and feedback can improve leadership style. The more leaders understand about the positive impact of self-awareness, the more they can incorporate the self-awareness process into the outcomes of their organization and to the growth of the people with whom they work.

There are two parts to this study. If you decide to participate, you will first be asked to complete a 43 question intake survey on self-awareness. Following the survey, you may be asked by the researcher to meet either by phone or in person for a 60-90 minute interview based on your answers to the survey. You can decide to participate in the survey only. You are free to remove yourself from the study at any time for any reason.

The interview phase of the study will take place at a time and place that is convenient for you and will take about 60-90 minutes. If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to discuss your perspective on how your self-awareness impacts your decision-making.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part in this study.

Self-awareness is seen as being one of the most important traits required for a leader to be successful. The purpose of this study is to better understand aspects of self-awareness in leaders, the feedback they send and receive, and how this feedback impacts their behavior. The study will explore examples of self-awareness in leaders to facilitate understanding, teaching, and training in self-awareness processing skills and encourage self-awareness in leaders. By examining leaders in their work environments and by looking specifically at a leader’s self-awareness skills and the feedback process that feeds self-awareness, the leader will gain a better understanding of their leadership performance as well as a better grasp of how self-awareness and feedback can improve their leadership style.

Your part in this study will be handled in a confidential manner. Only the researchers will know that you participated in this study. You will remain anonymous in any reports or publications based on this research. Pseudonyms will be used if any of your data is represented. We will not identify you or any individual as being of this project.
To ensure the safety of participants, the researcher will follow strict procedures of confidentiality in all recording, whether written or audio, and keep all physical data locked in a secured area. Electronic data will be stored on a secure, password protected computer and/or flash drive. When writing the results, the researcher will use pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants, as well as take care to not reveal any information that would potentially allow readers to identify the participant or the organization they work for.

There will be no names, individual or organizational, on any materials, including the final written thesis and/or article(s).

Data will be used to write and publish a doctoral thesis. In the future, this data might also be used for further publication in industry journals.

The decision to participate in this research project is up to you. You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may withdraw at any time.

**You will not be paid for your participation in this study.**

**If you have any questions about this study,** please feel free to call Patricia Steiner at 808.292.0655, the person mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact Bryan Patterson at 352.219.9670, the Principal Investigator.

**If you have any questions about your rights in this research,** you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

You may keep this form for yourself.

Thank you.

_Bryan Patterson and Patricia Steiner_

_I consent to participate in these interviews. I have read and understand the above information, or have had it explained to me._

Name ___________________________ Date _______________

Printed name of person above

Signature of the researcher ___________________________ Date _______________

Printed name of person above

APPROVED

Northeastern University - Human Subject Research Protection

Rev. 5/26/2015
Appendix E. Unsigned Consent Form

c. Unsigned Consent Form for Web-based online surveys

Northeastern University, Department of:
Name of Investigator(s): Bryan Patterson, Principle Investigator; Patricia Steiner, Doctoral Student and Researcher
Title of Project: How leaders learn: A longitudinal study of leadership development through authenticity, self-awareness, and feedback.
Request to Participate in Research
We would like to invite you to participate in a web-based online survey. The survey is part of a research study whose purpose is gain insight into self-awareness processes used by leaders. This survey should take about 10 minutes to complete.
We are asking you to participate in this study because you are a successful leader with at least 10 years of leadership experience. You must be at least 18 years old to take this survey.
The decision to participate in this research project is voluntary. You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the web-based online survey, you can stop at any time.
There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part in this study.
Your responses may help us learn more about leader’s self-awareness skills so that leaders will gain a better understanding of their leadership performance as well as a better grasp of how self-awareness and feedback can improve their leadership style.
You will not be paid for your participation in this study.
Your part in this study will be handled in a confidential manner. Any reports or publications based on this research will use only group data and will not identify you or any individual as being affiliated with this project.
If you have any questions regarding electronic privacy, please feel free to contact Mark Nardone, NU’s Director of Information Security via phone at 617-373-7901, or via email at privacy@neu.edu.
If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Patricia Steiner at steiner.p@husky.neu.edu, 808.292.0655 or Bryan Patterson, the Principal Investigator at b.patterson@new.e 352.219.9670.
If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.2588, Email: c.regina@new.e. You may call anonymously if you wish.
By returning the attached survey, you are indicating that you consent to participate in this study. Please print out a copy of this consent form for your records.

Thank you for your time.
Patricia F. Steiner

[Approval stamp]
Appendix F. REAL: The role-specific evaluation of authenticity in leaders

Thank you for your participation in my research. The following questions are designed to provide me with information on how you see yourself in a leadership role. There is no right or wrong answer. There are 43 questions. It should take you no longer than 10 minutes to complete your answers. Please be as honest as you can be.

**SELF-KNOWLEDGE**

**Personal values and beliefs**

1. I can quickly list my primary strengths and weaknesses.
   - Not at all descriptive of me
   - Very descriptive of me if not completely

2. I know my most valuable leadership qualities.
   - Not at all descriptive of me
   - Very descriptive of me if not completely

3. I know who I am at my core.
   - Not at all descriptive of me
   - Very descriptive of me if not completely

4. I know which of my beliefs are most important to me.
   - Not at all descriptive of me
   - Very descriptive of me if not completely

5. I know which of my values are my biggest priorities.
   - Not at all descriptive of me
   - Very descriptive of me if not completely

6. I know which of my beliefs are strongest, relative to my other beliefs.
   - Not at all descriptive of me
   - Very descriptive of me if not completely

7. I can list and describe the values I most often rely on.
   - Not at all descriptive of me
   - Very descriptive of me if not completely

**Personal Goals**

8. If someone asks me, I can list my primary goals.
   - Not at all descriptive of me
   - Very descriptive of me if not completely

**SELF-AWARENESS**

**Physiology/Body**

9. When my stomach tightens from nervousness, I am instantaneously aware of it.
   - Not at all
   - Rarely
   - Sporadic
   - Not sure
   - Sometimes
   - Frequently
   - Often if not always

10. When there is a stressful moment, I notice how my body is reacting.
    - Not at all
    - Rarely
    - Sporadic
    - Not sure
    - Sometimes
    - Frequently
    - Often if not always

**Emotions/Feelings**

11. I notice my internal emotional reactions as they occur.
    - Not at all
    - Rarely
    - Sporadic
    - Not sure
    - Sometimes
    - Frequently
    - Often if not always

**Cognition/Thought**

12. I notice when I am feeling vulnerable.
    - Not at all
    - Rarely
    - Sporadic
    - Not sure
    - Sometimes
    - Frequently
    - Often if not always

13. I observe my thoughts as they occur.
    - Not at all
    - Rarely
    - Sporadic
    - Not sure
    - Sometimes
    - Frequently
    - Often if not always

14. I notice how my attention shifts while I'm interacting with others.
    - Not at all
    - Rarely
    - Sporadic
    - Not sure
    - Sometimes
    - Frequently
    - Often if not always

15. I am aware of when I'm feeling uncertain about something.
    - Not at all
    - Rarely
    - Sporadic
    - Not sure
    - Sometimes
    - Frequently
    - Often if not always

**AUTHENTIC BEHAVIOR**

**Personal Values/Beliefs**

16. I act according to what I value.
    - Not at all
    - Rarely
    - Sporadic
    - Not sure
    - Sometimes
    - Frequently
    - Often if not always

17. I behave in line with my personal beliefs.
    - Not at all
    - Rarely
    - Sporadic
    - Not sure
    - Sometimes
    - Frequently
    - Often if not always

18. I live by my moral standards.
    - Not at all
    - Rarely
    - Sporadic
    - Not sure
    - Sometimes
    - Frequently
    - Often if not always
It is rewarding for me to privately endure my negative aspects of self, knowing that I have actively overcome my personal struggles. It is personally fulfilling to effectively manage the challenges to my authentic self that otherwise might bring to a situation. It is gratifying to overcome my natural tendencies that might otherwise prevent me from striving forward. I'm instead prioritizing others' growth or success, which I choose to behave this way out of kindness towards others. I believe that doing so will enable my group to be more effective.

Identified Regulation

That is what others expect from people in my position. I want others to believe that I have everything under control, because skilled performers usually do. That is what others expect from people in my position.

Introjected Regulation

I believe people in my position ought to conceal their vulnerabilities. I want others to believe that I have everything under control, because skilled performers usually do. That is what others expect from people in my position.

External Regulation

I am behaving in ways that ensure that others will like me. I am concerned that others will dislike me if I show them my vulnerabilities. I don't want to suffer the consequences of rocking the boat. I know if I stay quiet, I am more likely to be rewarded. I would rather avoid the negative repercussions that can result from challenging others.

Emotions /Opinions

I openly express to others how I feel about issues. I candidly share my emotions and reactions with others. I am transparent with others about my aspirations. I intend to act in alignment with my established values. My behavior demonstrates my values.

Personal Goals

I am transparent with others about my aspirations. I am behaving in ways that ensure that others will like me. I am concerned that others will dislike me if I show them my vulnerabilities. I don't want to suffer the consequences of rocking the boat. I know if I stay quiet, I am more likely to be rewarded. I would rather avoid the negative repercussions that can result from challenging others.

Not at all | Rarely | Sporadic | Not sure | Sometimes | Frequently | Often if not always
---|---|---|---|---|---|---
19. My behavior demonstrates my values.
20. While making decisions, I rely on my fundamental values and beliefs.
21. I intend to act in alignment with my established values

Not at all | Rarely | Sporadic | Not sure | Sometimes | Frequently | Often if not always
---|---|---|---|---|---|---
22. I am transparent with others about my aspirations.
23. I openly express to others how I feel about issues.
24. I candidly share my emotions and reactions with others.
25. I verbalize my genuine concerns to others

Not at all | Rarely | Sporadic | Not sure | Sometimes | Frequently | Often if not always
---|---|---|---|---|---|---
26. I am very explicit with others about how I feel about things.

Not at all | Rarely | Sporadic | Not sure | Sometimes | Frequently | Often if not always
---|---|---|---|---|---|---
27. I am behaving in ways that ensure that others will like me.
28. I am concerned that others will dislike me if I show them my vulnerabilities.

Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree
---|---|---|---|---|---|---
29. I don't want to suffer the consequences of rocking the boat.
30. I know if I stay quiet, I am more likely to be rewarded.

Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree
---|---|---|---|---|---|---
31. I would rather avoid the negative repercussions that can result from challenging others.

Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree
---|---|---|---|---|---|---
32. I believe people in my position ought to conceal their vulnerabilities.
33. I want others to believe that I have everything under control, because skilled performers usually do.

Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree
---|---|---|---|---|---|---
34. That is what others expect from people in my position.

Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree
---|---|---|---|---|---|---
35. It is somewhat meaningful for me to contain myself in situations when my authentic self might otherwise interfere

Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree
---|---|---|---|---|---|---
36. By doing so, it can be more constructive under certain circumstances.

Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree
---|---|---|---|---|---|---
37. I believe that doing so will enable my group to be more effective.

Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree
---|---|---|---|---|---|---
38. I choose to behave this way out of kindess towards others.
39. I'm instead prioritizing others' growth or success, which I believe is important.

Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree
---|---|---|---|---|---|---
40. It is gratifying to overcome my natural tendencies that might otherwise prevent me from striving forward.
41. It is personally fulfilling to effectively manage the challenges to my authentic self that might otherwise bring to a situation.

Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree
---|---|---|---|---|---|---
42. I find it gratifying to be in control of how my true self shows up in my organizational setting.
43. It is rewarding for me to privately endure my negative aspects of self, knowing that I have actively overcome my personal struggles.